University of Alberta

The Experiences of College Presidents

by

Gregory William Charyna

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

in

Educational Administration

Department of Educational Policy Studies

Edmonton, Alberta

Spring 1996

National Library of Canada
Acquisitions and Bibliographic Services Branch
395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale du Canada
Direction des acquisitions et des services bibliographiques
395, rue Wellington
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0N4

Your file *Votre référence*

Our file *Notre référence*

The author has granted an irrevocable non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of his/her thesis by any means and in any form or format, making this thesis available to interested persons.

L'auteur a accordé une licence irrévocable et non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de sa thèse de quelque manière et sous quelque forme que ce soit pour mettre des exemplaires de cette thèse à la disposition des personnes intéressées.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in his/her thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège sa thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

ISBN 0-612-10780-9

Canada

University of Alberta

Library Release Form

Name of Author: Gregory William Charyna

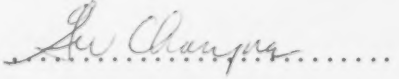
Title of Thesis: The Experiences of College Presidents

Degree: Master of Education

Year this Degree Granted: 1996

Permission is hereby granted to the University of Alberta Library to reproduce single copies of this thesis and to lend or sell such copies for private, scholarly, or scientific research purposes only.

The author reserves all other publication and other rights in association with the copyright in the thesis, and except as hereinbefore provided, neither the thesis nor any substantial portion thereof may be printed or otherwise reproduced in any material form whatever without the author's prior written permission.



11148 36A Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T6J 0E7

March 1, 1996

University of Alberta

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled *The Experiences of College Presidents* submitted by Gregory William Charyna in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Educational Administration.

.....
J. Fris, Supervisor

.....
S. Scott

.....
M. A. Bibby

March 4, 1996
Date

Abstract

What is it like to be a college president? There appears to be a dearth of information regarding the experiences of college presidents in the Canadian higher education context. More information may be obtained by listening to college presidents from Western Canada and having them describe and reflect on their successes, failures, satisfactions and disappointments.

The findings describe the experiences of the college presidents in terms of four main themes. First, the job is relentless in its complexity. Second, the relational style of the president reveals his character. The third theme introduces how the presidents deal with the demands of the job. The fourth theme presents how the presidents maintain perspective in the midst of their role.

The cost of holding this particular office can be quite high. In order to be effective, presidents must become adept at maintaining a healthy perspective on their role and being proactive with respect to physical and emotional health issues.

Acknowledgements

I would like to recognize those who have played significant role in making this thesis a reality:

My beloved wife, Karen,

Steadfast supporter, exhorter, encourager. Thanks for helping to bring this chapter of my studies to a close so that together we might look forward to a new season of life!

Joe Fris,

For your advice and insights into the research, I am thankful. For reminding me to keep things in perspective, I am grateful.

Mary Ann Bibby,

Thank-you for showing interest in the study, seeing its potential, and taking the time to help me see more clearly.

Sue Scott,

For your input and guidance, and for ensuring that I might finish well, thanks. Your efforts in the midst of a busy schedule are much appreciated.

Presidents Buchman, Mercer, McLeod, Sawatzky and Smith,

Thank-you for your willingness to share your experiences and contribute to our understanding of leadership in this context.

Table of Contents

Chapter One—Introduction To The Research

Background 1

Purpose 2

The Research Problem 3

Description of Terms 4

Assumptions and Delimitations 4

Researcher's Expectations 5

Outline of the Study ..10

Chapter Two—Review Of The Literature

Leadership Research ..11

Overview ..11

Profile of a President ..12

Leadership and Values ..16

Summary ..21

Passing the Torch: Practitioner Expertise ..22

Introduction ..22

Max DePree ..22

Peter Block ..23

Kenneth E. Eble ..24

Joseph Kauffman ..25

Clara Lovett ..26

Robert Hahn ..27
Personal Experience ..28
Synthesis of the Literature ..33

Chapter Three—Method

Design of the Study ..34
Methodology ..34
Validity and Generalizability ..36
Participants ..37
Data Collection ..38
Data Analysis ..39
Ethics ..40

Chapter Four—Findings

The Job is Relentless in its Complexity ..41
Exciting One Minute, A Disaster the Next ..42
Perception vs Reality ..42
Raising Funds ..44
Marketing the College ..46
Cultivating Campus Environment ..47
Taking Care of Personnel ..47
Communicating Mission ..49
Summary ..50

The Relational Style of the President Reveals His Character ..51

Connecting With Faculty, Staff and Students ..51
Trusting ..57
Encouraging ..59
Influencing ..60
Communicating Vision and Values ..61
Summary ..65

How the Presidents Deal With the Demands of the Job ..65
The Burden of Being Responsible ..66
Feeling Alone in Leadership ..69
Dealing with Diversity ..71
Making Decisions ..73
Managing Conflict: Tattered and Torn ..76
Receiving Criticism ..78
Being Supported in Leadership ..79

How Presidents Maintain Perspective on Their Work ..81
Coping with Stress and Pressure ..82
Having a Healthy Outlook ..83
Summary of Findings ..88

Chapter Five—Discussion

Introduction ..90
Comparison with the Literature ..90

The Skills of a Leader ..90
The Heart of a Leader ..93
The Experience of Leadership ..95
Summary ..97
Considering the Themes ..97
Relentless Complexity: "How Would You Like to Walk in My Shoes for a Day?" ..97
Character Revealed in Relationship 101
Dealing with the Demands of the Role 102
Maintaining Perspective 104
Summary 109
Suggestions for Further Research 110
Postscript 112

References 113

Appendices 117

List of Tables

Table 1	Profile of the President	..16
Table 2	"Heart" Aspects of Leadership	..21
Table 3	Practitioners' Leadership Highlights	..28
Table 4	Personal Experience	..32

Chapter 1

Introduction To The Research

Background to the Research

The following is one college president's description of a typical "evening and next morning in the life" of a college president:

> I take that bag of stuff home, I get my supper, I look at the news, I go to sleep. At 7:30 I wake up, I go to dining room table... I'm working 'til eleven, trying to give the secretaries enough to do because I'm going to be in meetings all day. That's the other trick, how do you keep everybody going and use their time. And then I go to bed. I get up at five o'clock this morning and I'm away again. It's great fun and the variety is fantastic. But no one would ever believe it. I mean, they still say to me downtown, "What's with your four months off?" (1b.1009-1027)

College presidents are charged with the responsibility of leading others—faculty, staff, students, and other constituents—to fulfill the institutional mission. They are expected to be nearly "superhuman" by fulfilling a variety of roles and having a broad base of knowledge that informs their choices and direction (Kauffman, 1980). Stakeholders expect the president to be a visionary, strategist, politician, scholar, crisis manager, conflict manager, and interpreter of reality (Fisher, Tack and Wheeler, 1988; Kerr & Gade, 1986; Benezet, Katz & Magnussen, 1981; Maurer, 1991; Birnbaum, 1992). But what is life like for college presidents who lead their institutions in the midst of multiple time demands and role expectations?

Keeping a diary of his experience as president of American University in Washington, D.C., Richard Berendzen (1986) wrote:

> A university president has great responsibility with relatively little authority. Many people in higher education want other people's authority but not their responsibility. On a campus, personnel matters involve elaborate safeguards; budget decisions require consensus-building. And a university president must defend his actions before an army of critics...

> Proper credentials for someone who wants to improve a university quickly are not so much scholarly publications or teaching awards as social graces and general knowledge. Am I up on world affairs? Can I speak French? Am I a gourmet? How is my tennis? Can I dance well—ballroom or disco? What do I know about museums in London and Madrid? I have scores of conversations like this (p. 11, 20).

But such insights into the experiences of college presidents are rare.

Although there is ample literature on leadership skills, techniques, and philosophy that relates to the business and schools arenas, there is little available about the educational experiences of college presidents in the Canadian higher education context.

Purpose of the Research

Perhaps you've wondered what it would be like to be a cowboy, and you've thought, "If I could just meet one real cowboy, I would get a taste of what the experience is like." You might feel quite confident that if you did meet one, you could trust the information you acquired during your conversation—meeting even one cowboy could be enough to satisfy your curiosity. In a similar fashion, perhaps you are curious about the experience of being a college president.

Conventional practice in the business environment is to study the chief executive officer (CEO) for new insights on leadership. The assumption here is that people who rise to the "top of the heap" have character qualities and expertise that make them worthy subjects of study and emulation. The same assumption is appropriate regarding college presidents—the key leaders in the educational realm. It is hoped that this study will contribute to understanding the experience of leadership from the perspectives of college presidents.

There are many tidy leadership theories available to readers of management/leadership literature (usually with a "business" bent); however, not many are oriented to the educational leader. Perhaps leadership theory would be enriched with perspectives on the nature of the college presidency, with new information and insights from presidents who are living the experience. As they share their stories with us, we may gain some insight into their humanity, not simply their professional skills.

This study is not a treatise on leadership; my purpose is to introduce you to some college presidents. By doing so, I believe that telling their stories could be useful in the development of future educational leaders. In addition, I hope that the experiences of these leaders/practitioners may be found to be not only meaningful, but will enhance what is found in the current literature.

The Research Problem

Compared to the ample literature on leadership skills, techniques, and philosophy within the business realm, there is little available on the educational leadership experience of college presidents in the Canadian higher education context. More information may be obtained by listening to college presidents and having them describe and reflect on their successes, failures, satisfactions and disappointments.

There are books that deal with administrative behaviour of college presidents, which provide some perspective on the work that presidents *do*; I am more interested in who the presidents *are* - how have they been affected by the experience of the presidency.

Hence my general research question is, "What is it like to be a college president?" My sub-questions relate to the pluses and minuses of being president, how the experience has changed them, what they have learned in the process, and what they would like to do in the future.

Description of Terms

"Experience" is meant to describe how college presidents sense, define, and respond to their worlds. The experiences of college presidents are influenced by numerous factors—for example, their previous employment, relationships with colleagues and co-workers, the influence of a mentor, managing a crisis, or accomplishing a particularly challenging project.

"College" is used in a generic sense to include both colleges and universities that are either public or private institutions.

Assumptions and Delimitations

Basic to the study were the following assumptions:

1. That college presidents were the best source of data to describe their experience.
2. That the perceptions of the college presidents were accurate expressions of their thoughts and experiences.

3. That insights into the leadership experience of college presidents could be gained by asking them to describe their experience, in terms of thoughts, values, and work activities.
4. That college presidents are educational leaders. Therefore, fulfilling their roles as presidents should be considered as exercising institutional leadership.
5. That the researcher, in interacting with the participants, will act as an appropriate instrument to collect the data.

The delimitations:

1. The study is delimited to include college or university presidents in one Western Canadian province.
2. Participants were delimited to five presidents of colleges and universities who were invited and willing to participate in the study.

These assumptions and delimitations are modeled after those by Thorpe (1989) in her study of nursing educational administrators.

Researcher's Expectations

I believe that cultivating a strong sense of community on our college campuses will contribute to the overall success of the educational experience for students, staff and faculty alike. "Community" forms only as we participate with one another in the experience of gaining and sharing knowledge, thus perpetuating and/or re-creating our particular academic and campus cultures (Bloom, 1987). There is a sense that "community" means a place of shared values and beliefs, a shared commitment to educational excellence and to the development of all facets of the

student's life. Community is also a place where individual and corporate responsibility are explored and embraced. I believe that college presidents play a key role in developing community; the sense or spirit of community emerges from good leadership. How do presidents create community?

College and university presidents are extremely busy individuals whose characters and work styles influence the way they lead their institutions. Depending on the leadership structure of the institution, presidents might be involved "hands on" in the day-to-day operations or they may be more of a figurehead, offering symbolic leadership and primarily fulfilling a public relations function. Regardless of the primary role they fulfill, I anticipate the following classes of behavior figure large in the presidents' experiences: communicating well and often, building relationships with various constituencies, and effectively managing conflict. Similarly, I anticipate that the aforementioned classes of behavior (or "categories") will coalesce, yielding the following themes and describing their experiences—at least in part: the physical and emotional cost of leadership and the fast-paced nature of the job. My research design was developed to minimize the effects of these expectations, which are based on my experience as an educational administrator.

I have worked in higher education for over six years in communications and admissions, observing two presidents with very different styles. Prior to attending university I trained for a career in broadcast journalism, which I pursued for three years. As a student of educational administration, I have been interested in learning more about what the experience of being the president is really like. The following comments will serve to bracket my perspective on presidential leadership.

My perception is that the college president is a "mystery position" on most college campuses. Students, faculty, and staff all know who the president is; references to the president are made with a certain reverence (or lack of it). The internal constituency also expects to see the president at all major campus events. People both on and off campus seem to believe that if there's a problem, start at the top—the president should know what is going on and should be able to give a full account for everything that has happened on the campus. But is seems to me that most people don't know what a president really does. This belief results from my experience of being a student and staff member in a college, observing a president over a period of seven years.

As a freshman, I perceived the president as powerful, aloof, and extremely busy. Even so, he would invite students to meet with him at any time. However, students and staff wishing to do so would have to ascend an oak staircase, enter the main upper office, proceed past a receptionist, then the president's secretary and possibly the executive assistant before actually meeting the president.

Later in my first year, I was playing racquetball with the president, after his daughter gave him my dorm phone number. She was in a few of my classes and knew I like to play racquet sports. It was a humbling thing to be soundly beaten (at first) by someone over twice my age. I did improve, however. Regardless, the president was no longer aloof to me. Powerful, yes, but more through the "Office of President" rather than his personal presence—on the racquetball court or elsewhere. To me, the president became approachable, warm, and genuine. He seemed to always have time for people. He would address the student body regularly, and often talked about the mission of the institution. Students sensed an earnestness from the

president, speaking on behalf of faculty and staff, about their commitment to student-centred education. As student leaders, many of us had actually been to the president's house to use the hot tub or hang out. Even if he was out of town, his house was available for student groups. He would show up at many student functions, sporting events, plays, concerts, and even our student leadership retreat weekends. It was in that relaxed kind of environment where I learned the president had a passion for Louis L'Amour novels, and had a complete library of them.

Despite the positive regard we may have had for the president as a person, my colleagues and I were unable to separate the man from the machinery of campus politics. I remember sitting participating in a "bull session" in my apartment with some fellow fourth-year students. We took turns criticizing the administration for tuition hikes and a "father knows best" way of dealing with the student association. While the president was mentioned by name, it was clear to me that it was not him as a person, but the fact that he was the most obvious target for our wrath as we blamed the entire system of decision making at the institution. Our concerns were with the unseeable, unknowable "administration"—which was comprised of a number of people we all knew and liked as individuals. But when they met as the administration, it was as if they mutated into another form, indistinguishable from their human counterparts.

Upon graduation I was hired on staff; my desk was on the same floor as the president's office. There I used my degree in communication, played more racquetball, and had opportunities to observe the president more closely. Seeing the president operate on a more day-to-day basis provided the impetus for me to consider higher education administration studies. What fascinated me was how the president

balanced the requirements of his role: the complex relationships that had to be maintained with internal and external constituencies in the midst of leading the institution in fulfilling its mission. He had a way of allowing himself to be known, adopting an open posture for people to know him as a person, not simply as the president. But the overarching concept of service to students, advancing the institution for their sakes and ensuring future stability were all things the president guided. I was and am still impressed with his leadership. This is not to say the man is without political enemies.

There will always be people internally and externally who disagree with the way things are being done. And even when a difficult decision had to be made, to terminate a middle management director, for example, the president did so not without some personal cost (regret, remorse, sadness?). And while the president was not at liberty to disclose details about this particular firing, it was obvious the it was not an easy process for him either. A "lose-lose" situation, to be sure, is one in which there are two sides to the story, and neither side will ever become fully known in the aftermath of such a decision. The president's humanity was apparent to me as I observed him in both good times and bad.

I am interested in the experiences of college presidents today as a result of observing the president of the institution I attended. I concluded that he was committed to his job and his colleagues, he presented himself as a leader willing to be known by the campus community, and in the midst of it all, he managed to maintain a fairly balanced life. But now I want to know more. What is the experience of being a college president like for institutional leaders in 1995-96? How do they feel about

their jobs? How do they feel about their relationships with colleagues and constituents? How are they affected by people's expectations of them?

Outline of the Study

In trying to open windows on the worlds of college presidents, a number of areas will be considered in the remaining chapters. Chapter 2 will review literature pertaining to college leadership. Chapter 3 will describe the research method employed. Findings from the conversations with the five college presidents will be presented in chapter 4, grouped into various categories and themes that begin to paint a general picture of their experiences. The final chapter will discuss the findings from chapter 4: first, in comparison with the literature from chapter 2; second, as an interpretation of the presidential experience; and third, as a springboard for suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2

Review Of The Literature

Information about the experience of being a college president can be gathered from three main sources. First, the findings of leadership researchers suggest frameworks for educational leadership, and provide a good overview of this research topic. The second source is direct experiences of leadership practitioners with their expertise of "doing" leadership. Third, stories about college presidents—either biographies or autobiographies—are considered valuable. The following review of extant information is organized accordingly.

Leadership Research

Overview

Researchers present the world of leadership in terms of "what could be" or "what should be"—the ideal model, through which leadership success may be attained. While we understand that theory and models are only one way of viewing leadership, it is difficult not to expect to be able to accomplish the very things researchers suggest are possible. The topic of leadership and the activity of leading have proven to be somewhat slippery subjects over the years. The following are some works that may help us put leadership into perspective in this study of the college presidency. To view the broad picture of leadership, a profile of the college presidents and their values will provide a basis for understanding educational leadership.

There is ample literature on leadership; however, much of it inconclusive. Sergiovanni (1992) cites Bennis and Nanus (1985), who wrote:

> Literally thousands of empirical investigations of leaders have been conducted in the last seventy-five years alone, but no clear and unequivocal understanding exists as to what distinguishes leaders from nonleaders and, perhaps more important, what distinguishes *effective* leaders from *ineffective* leaders and *effective* organizations from *ineffective* organizations. (p.2)

There are over 7500 studies on the practice of leadership (Birnbaum, 1992). As for how leadership should be practiced in a given situation, the answer appears to be: it all depends. There is no requisite set of characteristics or traits that a president must have, only suggestions to increase the likelihood of success. And whether the president is successful or not, he or she will last on average only five years in office (Birnbaum, 1992). Presidents, while important to the functioning of the institution, are expendable if goals are not being met or if the Board feels a change is necessary (Kauffman, 1980; Birnbaum, 1992). Presidents do serve, as Kauffman said, "at the pleasure of the Board."

Profile of a President

So how should a president best function in the role? Is a president affected by the perceptions of his or her colleagues? For example, Hogarth (1987) believes that "a president of a college is looked up to as a leader—at least until he proves that he is otherwise" (p.19). Does this mean that followers expect leadership and will not accept any activity that is considered to be "maintaining" or "avoiding" rather than leading?

Fisher, Tack, and Wheeler (1988) profile what an effective college president should be. Their research involved surveying 485 U.S. college presidents and

observers (defined as heads of foundations or national higher education professional associations), asking them to list the top five most effective presidents that they were aware of. In turn, the researchers interviewed the top 18 presidents who were most frequently mentioned. Their research suggests that presidents behave in certain ways as leaders of their institutions. The list has some surprising statements. Effective presidents are:

- Less collegial and more distant.
- Less likely to be spontaneous in speech and actions.
- Less restricted by organizational structure or by the consensus of those to be led.
- Less likely to appear to make decisions easily.
- More confident.
- More inclined to rely on gaining respect than on being liked.
- More inclined to take calculated risks.
- More committed to an ideal or a vision than to an institution.
- More inclined to work long hours.
- More supportive of the controversial concept of merit pay.
- More interested in encouraging people to think differently and creatively.
- More likely to be concerned about higher education in general than with one institution (p. 111).

These findings seem to emphasize the focus that a college president must have in order to do the job well, and is supported by a later study that discussed some of the "myths" associated with the presidency, including how close or aloof the leader is, and how charismatic or uncharismatic, for example.

Birnbaum's (1992) work on the International Leadership Project (ILP) yielded five myths of academic leadership. Defining myths as over-simplifications and partial truths, they are:

- the myth of presidential vision
- the myth of president as transformational leader
- the myth of presidential charisma
- the myth of presidential distance
- the myth of presidential style and traits

The most pernicious myths, in Birnbaum's view, "are those that call for charisma and transformation which, taken to extremes, may lead to the imperial presidency. They can cause presidents to see themselves as personally responsible for the college's survival and development, and to insulate themselves from learning" (p.47). Ultimately Birnbaum suggests that, in terms of defining what could be considered effective leadership, regardless of one's style, "A leader who is able to command support of constituents, even when those constituents disagree on goals to be pursued or the resources necessary to achieve them, has met the needs of multiple and conflicting stakeholders and has a claim to be considered a good leader" (p.56). Similarly, Kerr and Gade (1986) grouped the variety of roles that a president must fulfill into three basic categories: mediator, initiator and gladiator (p. 133). Functioning in these relational capacities would enable the president to be proactive in dealing with what seems to be inevitable in most organizations—conflictual situations.

In the educational environment, Maurer (1991) suggests things that could be lacking in the relationship between individuals or groups that can cause conflict:

(a) Lack of trust
(b) Lack of integrity
(c) Lack of benefits
(d) Lack of information
(e) Lack of clarity. (p.4)

These areas seem to reflect directly on how the president is perceived as a person and how he or she communicates.

Benezet, Katz, and Magnussen (1981) interviewed 25 presidents, collecting data on perceptions of the presidency, characteristics of individual presidents, and the way in which presidents do their jobs. The researchers found that in order to carry

out the full measure of their office, presidents must a) recognize the human dynamics of the college presidency, b) deal with the tension of relating to faculty, and c) implement ideas and plans without being concerned about who gets the credit.

> The president . . . affects not only substance and structure but also the institution's morale and ambiance. The mood or spirit of the institution is important because it determines the zest with which the institution and its people carry on their business. [Presidents] might be better leaders if they more fully recognized their function in all its ramifications, if they realize they need more education—that is, constant reflection on their office, appropriate regular evaluation, and whatever in-service "training" is available. Moreover, they should be mindful . . . that democratic leaders have the responsibility to make their followers less, not more, dependent on them. (p. 21)

A president must also create and sustain an atmosphere at the institution where striving for excellence is embraced by the entire community. Hogarth (1987) suggests administrators (by inference, presidents) are faced with the challenge of "trying to assure quality performance in the work of all who are responsible to them" and communicating those assurances to the satisfaction of influential constituencies (p. 135).

Gilley, Fulmer, and Reithlingshoefer (1986) suggest a list of presidential qualities that resonates with those mentioned above. The list includes the characteristics of intelligence and creativity, vision, and building and sustaining a team (p. 59-60). These items are perhaps not surprising; a number of books feature similar lists of desirable leadership characteristics (Eble, 1978; Benezet, Katz, & Magnusson, 1981).

While there are numerous lists of desirable characteristics, there is, as was previously mentioned, no definitive list, only a general consideration of the things that a president should be.

Table 1
Profile of the President

Description	Representative Author(s)
• **effective**	Fisher, Tack & Wheeler, 1988
- intelligent, visionary,	
- trying to achieve quality performances from staff	Hogarth, 1987
-team builder	Gilley, Fulmer & Reithlingschoefer, 1986
• **mediator, initiator, gladiator**	Kerr & Gade, 1986
-conflict manager	Maurer, 1991
• **politically astute**	Benezet, Katz & Magnusson, 1981
-recognizes human dynamics	
-deals with tension in relating to faculty	
-implements plans without concern as to who gets the credit	
• **expendable**	Kauffman, 1980; Birnbaum, 1992
-recognizes he or she can dismissed at any time	

Leadership and Values

Regardless of the variety of roles the president must fulfill or the style, traits and characteristics which are employed to do so, it would be reasonable to expect that the president operates out of a particular value system that is beyond simply accomplishing tasks.

Hodgkinson (1990) discusses a philosophical base to the question of leadership and the inner journey that is required of each leader. His approach to leadership is composed not only of theory and technology, but of praxis. This is defined as "purposeful human conduct which would be an amalgam of theory (rationality, science) and values (morals, emotions, ethics) . . . suggesting a duality in

action, two moments of consciousness or reflection on the one hand, and behaviour and commitment on the other" (p.113).

Hodgkinson would define administrative morality as having two components: first, "the conscious commitment to the highest level of interest proper to one's personality and personal situation (as determined by self-value analysis)" and second, "the discipline of translating the resultant values into action and being constrained by them in action" (p. 135). So the question would then be, how does one live out of these personal values ? Such a belief system would surely have something to do with how one relates to colleagues, makes decisions, and plans for the future.

Slater (1995) examines the sociology of leadership from the theoretical perspectives germane to that discipline: structural-functionalist, political-conflict, constructivist, and critical humanist. He concludes that:

> Leadership is social-political action with an explicit moral point of view, and it aims to give meaning to collective effort. Leadership, moreover, is not even a matter of getting people to want to do what is wanted of them. It is rather a matter of getting them to want to do what they should do, that is, what is right. (p.470)

Slater is in agreement with Sergiovanni (1992) and Hodgkinson (1991), who view leadership for educators as pursuing and living out the "moral rightness" of what their positions and their jobs require. It would appear that leaders then must invite their colleagues to see the need for this "moral rightness" as a basis of operation within their organization.

Ogawa and Bossert (1995) suggest that leadership be regarded as an organizational quality, where:

> administrators are instrumental in adopting structures to mirror cultural rules in the environment. They then engage other members of their organizations in symbolic activities that focus on these structures. These activities, in turn,

> shape and reinforce shared values and beliefs, which can produce commitment, or solidarity, leading to coordinated activity. (p.239)

So, how do presidents or other educational leaders "engage" members of the institution so that this process may begin? In effect, by sharing leadership amongst peers, or empowerment, relationships amongst colleagues are strengthened as is the sense of "ownership" from individuals. In Maxcy's leadership paradigm, leadership is primarily transactional; empowerment has taken place when leadership can also be shared by followers (to the extent that they accede to the expectations of the leader). This sounds like some of the principles of Senge's (1990) concepts regarding learning organizations which are being revitalized in the most obvious learning organizations—schools.

Senge (1990) cogently describes the leadership of the old and new paradigm that is being embraced.

> At its heart, the traditional view of leadership is based on assumptions of people's powerlessness, their lack of personal vision and inability to master the forces of change, deficits which can be remedied only by a few great leaders.
> The new view of leadership in learning organizations centers on subtler and more important tasks. In a learning organization, leaders are designers, stewards, and teachers. They are responsible for *building organizations* where people continually expand their capabilities to understand complexity, clarify vision, and improve shared mental models—that is, they are responsible for learning. (p. 340)

Bensimon, Neumann, and Birnbaum (1989) state that educational leadership is experiencing a paradigm shift from a rational perspective toward a cultural and symbolic perspective. They suggest that "Presidents who consider their role from a symbolic perspective will be less concerned about leaving an imprint and more concerned with helping their campuses make sense of an equivocal world" (p.77).

Sense making doesn't sound as alluring as bold leadership; nevertheless, it can be effective, the authors contend.

> Much of good leadership consists of appropriately doing those things that others expect leaders to do, attending to the routines of institutional life, repairing them as they are buffeted and challenged by internal and external forces, and maintaining the organizational culture. These behaviors are essential, but usually not heroic. When they are done well, they often go unnoticed; when they are done poorly, the institution may suffer and the tenure of the leader may be threatened.
> When things appear not to be going well and the cause is unknown, a natural tendency exists to blame those nominally in charge and to call for "strong" leadership. It is usually an exercise in rhetoric rather than of organizational analysis. (p. 77)

This perspective on routine college leadership is shared Birnbaum (1988) who suggests that the presidential role is not to direct order but to provide the illumination needed to permit ongoing organizational processes to continue. Birnbaum believes that institutions that have a good monitoring system in place with what he terms "self-correcting feedback loops" — in other words, strong communication mechanisms in place to isolate, analyze, and correct a problem quickly and efficiently—

> tend to run themselves. . . . This does not mean that leaders are unnecessary to the system. . .they can influence which organizational strengths get optimized, but ordinarily they will have little control over how units function within those constraints (p. 196).

What is being proposed are substitutes for traditional leadership, in which leadership is shared and owned by the entire campus community. Two examples:

Maxcy (1994) summarizes the post-modern view of educational leadership by focusing on collaborative and collegial leading:

> Privileged views (primarily psychological and sociological) of education leadership are being replaced by context-driven mosaics that highlight the transactional nature of leading and following. Owing to the redistribution of knowledge and power to those closest to the pedagogical event, administrative leadership as management and dictation finds substitutes in the form of collaborative and collegial leading in which the mantle of "leader" trades hands depending on the task and requisite skills needed. (p. 154)

Rather than having top-down, hierarchical leadership, Sergiovanni (1992) suggests that culture could be an effective substitute. In doing so, leaders create the conditions in the institution whereby a moral response is elicited. Sergiovanni suggests that hygiene factors (the conditions of work) and motivators (the work itself) contribute to the following conditions and responses by individuals engaged in the work:

conditions	**response** "my work: ..."
experienced meaningfulness	...is worthwhile
experienced responsibility	...is contributing to the big picture
knowledge of results	...is good and makes a difference (p.60)

The moral edge to Sergiovanni's work highlights the need for the educational leader to create and nurture the kind of conditions within the institution where this paradigm is possible.

In reference to the authority that can be employed by a school leader, Sergiovanni (1992) defines four sources of authority:

- psychological — motivational technology and human relations skills
- bureaucratic — mandates, rules, regulations, job descriptions, and expectations
- professional — seasoned craft knowledge and personal expertise.
- moral — obligations and duties derived from widely shared values, ideas, and ideals. (pp. 30-31)

Sergiovanni suggests:

> administrators ought not to choose among psychological, bureaucratic, and moral authority; instead, the approach should be additive. To be additive, however, moral authority must be viewed as legitimate. Further, with servant

> leadership as the model, moral authority should become the cornerstone of one's overall leadership practice. (p.139)

Sergiovanni believes that "if we want our theory to reflect emerging practice, then we need to move the moral dimension in leadership away from the periphery and right to the centre of inquiry, discussion, and practice" (p.3).

This holistic perspective resonates with Schein (cited in Hicks, 1993) who suggests the unique and essential function of leadership, as opposed to management, is the manipulation of culture. Schein proposes that "the critical difference between management and leadership is the ability to articulate what the experience of the group has been and what it means" (p. 19).

Leadership Research—Summary

Table 2 summarizes the various "heart" aspects of the experience of the president or educational leader in a chart form.

Table 2
"Heart" Aspects

Description	Representative Author(s)
• **a moral leader**	Hodgkinson, 1990; Slater, 1995; Sergiovanni, 1992
-getting people to do "right things"	
• **intuitive**	Birnbaum, 1992
• **sharing leadership, making it part of the school's culture**	Ogawa & Bossert, 1995 Bensimon, Neumann & Birnbaum, 1989 Maxcy, 1991 Johnson, 1994
-a manipulator of culture	Schein, 1985
• **building a learning organization**	Senge, 1990

Passing the Torch: Practitioner Expertise

Introduction

The sources in this section are practitioners in education or business who try to guide the reader into being a better equipped, more skilled leader. They hope to pass along some things from their experience to teach us, or at the very least, give us some food for thought. Some of the most significant contributors in this area are reviewed below.

Max DePree

Max DePree was a longtime president and CEO of Herman Miller, Inc, a U.S.-based furniture manufacturer. His writing style is anecdotal; it is the stories of his experiences with people that powerfully illustrate concepts for leaders to reflect upon.

From general literature of a philosophical, whimsical nature, De Pree (1989) suggests that "The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between the two, the leader must become a servant and a debtor" (p. 11). Part of the task of a president (or any leader) is to determine what the organization expects of the office of president, and the individual leader. De Pree (1992) suggests:

> The organization expects the leader to define and to express both in writing and, especially, through behavior the beliefs and values of the institution.
>
> To carry out its work, the organization needs from a leader a clear statement of its vision and its strategy.
>
> A leader is responsible for lean and simple statements of policy consistent with beliefs and values, vision and strategy.

> A leader ensures that the planning for the organization at all levels receives the necessary direction and approvals.
>
> A leader reviews and assesses results primarily in three areas: key appointments and promotions, results compared to the plan, the connections to key publics.
>
> Leaders are accountable for the continuous renewal of the organization.
>
> A leader ought never to embarrass followers (pp. 26-32).

De Pree further defines leadership as a position of servanthood, a posture of debt, and a forfeiture of rights (p. 220). The concept of creating meaning by "connecting voice and touch" also comes from Depree's second book, Leadership jazz. Connecting voice and touch requires that there be no discrepancies between what I say (when I communicate my values, beliefs, etc.), and what I do (when I make decisions, work with colleagues, lead followers.). Leadership is analogous to when a jazz band leader conducts his players. To create jazz music together, each player is able to support the others and, at various times, play a solo. At the same time, the conductor must be comfortable leading the band and standing back on occasion to let someone else 'take the lead.' The allusion to empowerment and shared leadership is readily apparent.

Peter Block

Block, a consultant for over 25 years, has authored The empowered manager and Stewardship. His experience as a consultant and teacher are apparent as he offers stories about some as his clients as illustrations.

Block (1993) writes about leadership as stewardship, dismantling the patriarchal, hierarchical influence in organizations in favor of partnership. As an example, in redesigning management practices and structures, a "re-humanizing" of the leadership role seems to be taking place:

> Stewardship means all employees need to know the truth about where we stand. They cannot contribute to what they cannot see. We need to give a complete picture about financial performance, good or bad. If we change our mind or just don't know what we are going to do, we have to get used to just saying so. Being indecisive at times, or confused, are human traits. Leadership, as we have created it, leaves little room for mistakes, ignorance, or confusion, which means it has little room for humanity. Let go of the mask of perfection. The desire to be perfect or look perfect is the wish to be God. And that is a sin. (p. 93)

Further, stewardship is a learning process that is measured qualitatively. "What truly matters in our lives is measured through conversation. Our dialogue with customers, employees, peers, and our own hearts is the most powerful source of data about where we stand" (p.209).

Current general literature clearly points out the shift from hierarchy and patriarchy, to shared decision making and creating and sustaining healthy work environments. Is the same true in the educational realm?

Kenneth E. Eble

Eble's guide for academic administrators comes out of more than 25 years experience as a faculty member and administrator in higher education.

Eble (1978) reminds us that the root of the word administer is *to serve* (p.2) and then offers some practical advice. His questions at the book's conclusion elevate the activity of administration to the larger questions of character and influence. He asks,

> Why should not every president have the inner strength, the moral center matched with the kind of wisdom and experience that is different from, neither inferior nor superior to, the faculty's, to be a visible and vocal presence before faculty and students as well as donors and trustees?. . . Administrators must give over some of their time to living in eternity and facing up to the demands, not of calendar and budget and the crowd below and the powers above, but of the universe. And if, at this book's end they find the message vague, the rhetoric embarrassing, can't figure out where to go to put in the call or what

> line to take it on, then they'd best shut down the office for a time, disconnect themselves from the university altogether, and put themselves in some communication with the universe. The university will be there when they get back, waiting for, hoping for, depending upon, whatever it is they have heard. (p. 149)

Joseph Kauffman

Even though Kauffman will also be referred to in the next section dealing with personal experiences of the presidency, it is appropriate to include him here as a practitioner who shares his experience as president of Rhode Island College with a view to teaching would-be presidents about the role.

In striving to elicit from readers the empathy and compassion for presidents that he feels is deserved, Kauffman (1980) cites William Rainey Harper (1904):

> The college president deserves the support of the intelligent man of modern times. His position is a trying one; his burden is heavy, and the reward is, at best, meager. His effort is always intended to serve the interests that make for truth and the higher life. He is not usually a "liar" or a "boss." He may sometimes be seen to be too self-satisfied; one could name a few such. But for the most part he does his work, conscious that he has the shortcomings which mark his kind, realizing keenly that his tenure of office, unlike that of his colleagues, is quite uncertain, yet fully resolved to perform his duty without fear of favor and to allow time to determine the question of his success or failure. (p. 186)

Harper was the first president of the University of Chicago. His comments of nearly a century ago articulate the experience of being a college president and still ring true today. Kauffman concludes his comments about the nature of the presidency by suggesting that presidents respond to their role out of a sense of calling, a spiritual dimension. Just as higher education celebrates the potential of human spirit, presidential leadership's goal should be to:

> . . . start a resistance movement against all those forces that shrivel the human spirit. I think the great challenge to all of us is essentially one of ethics. How do we encourage and preserve a reverence for life? How do we help life

> achieve its highest destiny? How do we develop the altruistic behavior that one associates with such goals? Unless we can make some progress in this direction, we will not truly be valued by all those we have the potential to serve. (p.116)

The questions that are being asked by Kauffman and Eble particularly are questions of a "spiritual" nature. The reality of a moral anchor or rootedness is, in their opinions, necessary—if not vital for a president to lead effectively. Lovett and Hahn anchor their thoughts in terms of ensuring a realistic perspective in a particular situation, so the an appropriate response can be formulated. Both presidents and their colleagues are responsible for ensuring that their perceptions are accurate.

Clara Lovett

Lovett is president of Northern Arizona University. Her comments come from her experience and desire to encourage the selection and nurturing of leaders "with the courage and imagination to be more than custodians of the status quo" (A44).

One of the dangers of college leadership has been described by Lovett (1994) as 'Magical Thinking,' which has two sides: stakeholders believe that the president will solve their problems, placing the highest priority on their individual concerns; presidents feel burdened by the expectation that they can and should be able to take care of everyone else's needs. What happens is that the president is constrained in his or her decision making ability, for fear of alienating a particular group, yet, a decision has to be made. One of the insidious aspects of magical thinking "requires . . . presidents to prove their worth by sparing the institution both faculty unrest and turnover among deans." The result often is choosing politically popular solutions to

financial or programmatic issues, deferring choices among competing priorities. Lovett explains the consequences:

> The collective magical thinking of competing groups requires the president to behave as though all claims on his or her attention were equally urgent and important. Worse, it requires the president to pretend that no conflicts of interest exist among the institution's stakeholders, all of whom typically profess great love for the institution. (p.A44)

Magical thinking can be cured only when presidential leadership acknowledges that conflicts of interest among various constituencies do exist, and when the entire community is prepared to play a role in finding solutions.

Robert Hahn

Hahn is president of Johnson State College.

Hahn (1995) asks, "How tough is it to be a college president?" looking first at the fallacies of presidential leadership, "that a president's job is harder today—more complex, fragmented, time consuming, and physically and emotionally demanding than it was in the past" (p. A64). He contends the personal, hands-on management style doesn't work and that leaders need to delegate more tasks. Hahn suggests "any style of leadership will work, given the right mix of individual and institution, the right blend of timing, luck, will, and skill" (p. A64). Hahn also challenges the current constituency mindset, referring to the occasion last year when the president of Harvard went on a medical leave of absence:

> The advice most freely offered to President Rudenstine has been that he needs to change his schedule, his approach, and his expectations. No one has suggested that his constituents might alter *their* expectations. How realistic and accurate is our definition of the presidential role? Students, faculty and staff members, top administrators, and trustees, if asked, would probably all define the job rather differently. We need to be more thoughtful about our definitions and expectations of the presidency. (p. A64)

Hahn's comments get at one of the root issues of leadership—how the president is perceived by the constituents. What is supposed to be a professional role is clouded or crowded out by personal expectations of co-workers, parents, alumni, and students. So the professional becomes personal, with great effect.

Table 3 highlights some of the main points emphasized by these leaders.

Table 3
Practitioners' Leadership Highlights

Practitioner	Discusses leader as:
Max DePree	• servant and debtor, responsible for: - communication of beliefs, values, vision - continuous organizational renewal - care for staff; empowerment
Peter Block	• "re-humanized." • developing stewardship in the organization.
Kenneth E. Eble	• having an inner strength, a moral centre.
Joseph Kauffman	• ethical; champion of the human spirit.
Clara M. Lovett	• responding to "magical thinking."
Robert Hahn	• aware of the effects of other's expectations.

Personal Experience

Perhaps the most intriguing stories are those from personal experience. Since I planned to interview five college presidents, I was interested to learn how the experiences of other college presidents were presented in the literature. This section is different than the previous one in that the experience is the main focus, as opposed to an intentional didacticism for which anecdotal stories were included. Stories of an individual's life and experiences can provide a wealth of material for study and reflection.

English (1995) argues for the return to the use of biography as a means of teaching and studying educational administration. The new biographical frontier he

discusses is the field of prosopography, or group biography. English suggests the contributions of biography to the study of leadership are significant, because besides teaching context and meaning, the study of biography is an excellent way to approach moral leadership and provides a good source for modeling reflective practice. The additional important contribution that biography makes, according to English, is that it restores the human variable to a study of leadership. English claims that

> . . . organizational sociology/theory has dehumanized schools. Leaders have been reduced to nameless actors in a fruitless search for generalized, context-free principles. . . . Biography restores the human variable to the position of the key variable, without necessarily becoming simply a study of great personages or a form of earlier hero worship or ritualized heroics. (p.215-217)

So, to re-introduce the "human variable" in this part of the study, what follows are some stories and comments from former presidents.

Kauffman (1980) intended his book, At the pleasure of the board, to be not only a description of his experience, but also an opportunity for practitioners to engage in some form of reflective practice while reading through each chapter. As Kauffman states, "Understanding intellectually what a president does is far different from being a president" (p. xiii). Acknowledging that presidents feel the hate and anger projected on them from internal and external constituencies for being "unable to make poverty an ignorance disappear and peace reign in the world," he shares his experiences:

> Presidents do not tell people what it feels like to have antiwar protesters hurl obscenities at them because they will not make war go away . . . Presidents do not tell what it feels like to be threatened by a board member, to be vilified in the student newspaper, to deal with an arsonist, call in police, or explain to the governor why an emergency situation could not have been anticipated. Defending *the* faculty, when some are slothful and fakers; defending *the* students, when some are beyond any seeming redemption; these are necessary and everyday responsibilities, at least in the public presidency. (p. 90)

Carbone (1981) summed up his conversations with college presidents by describing the role as "splendid agony" — an oxymoron, to be sure, but it conveys the sense of exhilaration and desperation that marks the presidency at times. Indeed, Carbone's collection of stories from former presidents covers not only their experience while being president, but also records what their lives are like after the presidency. One quote from a former college president sets the tone for the book:

> I would not have missed being a college president. I'd never try it again. I look back on it all and say I would not have missed it, but sometimes I wonder if it was worth all the buffeting, the endless hours, the fatigue, the days and nights away from the family, the cheap shots. (p. vii)

Berendzen (1986) records what he calls "the saddest issue in my administrative life" (p.78) in his autobiographical book, Is my armor on straight?. The contract for custodial duties at his university were awarded to a private firm. While the decision was ultimately right, the fact that some workers suffered in the process is something Berendzen deeply regrets. There are also moments of deep satisfaction in being president. Berendzen shares a story about meeting with a student singing group in his office and reflects on the importance of such meetings.

> On occasions like this I remember anew that undergrads are young, wide-eyed, and eager to experience life. I also realize that to them the presidency of their university is special. Some may complain about whoever has the top title, but most hold that position, if not the individual filling it, in high esteem. . . . One student blushes as she shakes my hand and another looks skyward and grins as we pass. To me, I am plain old Richard Berendzen, the fellow who got in trouble sleeping in his faculty office and who blew up his parents' sidewalk as a child. My face is just more leathery. But that is not how some students see me. To them, I realize again today, I am their president. And in person, I am real rather than a picture in a catalog. (p.220)

Berendzen is aware of how this particular constituency perceives him. What can be most trying is not knowing how to interpret a lack of response from a group or an individual.

> A week ago we called a major donor's office and asked for him to call back. He has not done so. Did he get the message? Is he just busy? Or is he disinterested? And what should I do? If he were the only one, I would be puzzled but patient. As it is, he is more the norm than the exception. Why do so many benefactors act this way? If they are disinterested, why don't they just say so? Even if disappointed, I would understand. Or at least I would know where we stood. Many of them play a cat-and-mouse game—baiting me one day, avoiding me the next. (p. 243)

Anyone can appreciate how unsettling it must be to not know where you stand with someone, especially when the messages you receive are inconsistent. It is encouraging to know that there will also be moments that encourage the heart and affirm the work that you've done. At perhaps his lowest point, President Berendzen candidly talks about his feelings of wanting to quit, how things weren't working out. He sat in the faculty-staff dining room alone, brooding over his meal, depressed, exhausted and uncertain how the current crisis would be resolved.

> My eyes fixed on my plate, head buzzing, thoughts ricocheting, I notice someone at my table. "I've never had the opportunity to meet you before, President Berendzen. I'm a senior and graduate in a few weeks. I just wanted to say that during the four years I've been at AU, the university's improved tremendously. It's getting better and better. I'm deeply proud of it. And I'm grateful to you." My mouth opens but no words come out. I choke back my wavering voice and blot my eyes as if they were tired. The student and I shake hands. With a cracking voice I say: "More than you'll ever know, I appreciate that." (p.321)

Flawn (1990) tells of a quote from English statesman Sir Edmund Burke, which has been on his office wall for many years: "Those who would carry on great public schemes must be proof against the worst fatiguing delays, the most mortifying disappointments, the most shocking insults, and what is worst of all, the presumptuous judgment of the ignorant upon their design." The author suggests that the quote is an accurate description of the experience of public university presidents and many private university presidents over the past 25 years. Flawn's book, A primer for university presidents, weaves his personal experience with practical

suggestions for the success of the new president. He prefaces the book with this comment: "Mr./Madam president, you may be attacked from any quarter at any time by any one of your many constituencies. Good luck" (p.xi).

Another longtime president put forward his thoughts abut the presidency in the form of letters to a new fictional president. George Lynn Cross was president of the University of Oklahoma from 1944 to 1968. He recalled one day late into the first decade of his presidency, "gazing somberly at a motto on my desk that read, 'Count the day lost when you don't get hell for something.' But I then brightened at the thought that I had not lost a single day in more than eight years" (p. 8). There is the sense that dealing with people's anger and disappointment is almost a daily occurrence. The literature from this section suggests there is a profound effect upon individual presidents as they strive to fulfill their roles.

Table 4
Summary of personal experience

Kauffman	• responding appropriately while under attack
Carbone	• experiencing "splendid agony" in leadership • wondering if it was worth it
Berendzen	• regretting some decisions • being esteemed by students as their president • not knowing how to interpret interaction with donors • feeling drained, spent in the role • receiving timely encouragement
Flawn	• believing attacks could from any quarter at any time
Cross	• "always getting hell for something" - recognizing that he would encounter somebody upset with his leadership or with the institution on a daily basis

Synthesis of Literature Review

All three sources—from research, practical and personal experience—provide helpful information for us to consider the question of the experience of being a college president. Perhaps what becomes most apparent as we attempt to learn about the experience of the presidency, is that the task appears to be somewhat daunting. It is hard to define leadership; the question of effective or successful leadership seems to be rationalized and relativised to the foibles and skills of particular individuals. One cannot presume to suggest what makes a superior college president. However, by reviewing some of the pertinent literature and sharing the stories of five presidents, my hope is that the reader will have enough new information so that informed conclusions may be drawn in considering this particular experience of leadership in higher education.

We started this chapter by considering what the president "should" be about, according to the literature. After our review of the pertinent literature, I offer the following synthesis of that information. The president "should" demonstrate leadership. His or her leadership is marked by skills congruent with some or all of the following categories:

- action - planning orientation, motivation to accomplish tasks
- vision, values - communicating values, aspirations, moral foundation
- empowerment - seeking organizational renewal and staff care
  - maximizing personal and institutional performance
- intermediation - negotiating, managing conflict, collaborating
- reflection - brooding over past experiences and future decisions
- responsiveness - willing to hear criticism and pursue change

Chapter 3

Method

Design of the Study

Methodology

This qualitative study explores the experiences of college presidents. The focus of the qualitative method is to "provide a way to understand perceptions of others and to explore how others attach meaning to events or life circumstances" (Berg, 1989). Bogdan and Biklen (1992) suggest that qualitative research includes the following characteristics:

a) the natural setting as the direct source and the researcher as the key instrument.
b) qualitative research is descriptive.
c) researchers are concerned with process rather than simply outcomes or products.
d) researchers tend to analyze their data inductively.
e) "meaning" is of essential concern in the qualitative approach (pp. 29-33).

I knew that the best way to describe the experiences of college presidents would be to invite them to talk about their experiences, to share their stories. As a result, I embraced qualitative research as the means by which a window could be opened into their worlds. Learning exactly how to "open the window" to provide the best view for the reader has been an enlightening process of discovery for me.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest that by collecting and asking questions and reflecting on the data, hypotheses or mini frameworks about concepts and their relationships can be developed:

> Often, one idea or insight sparks another, directing you to look more closely at the data, to give meaning to words that seemed previously not to have

> meaning, and to look for situations that might explain what is happening here. (p.43)

In adopting the qualitative approach to discovering the meaning and relationships of the data, Lancy (1993) discusses van Manen's (1988) expectation that the qualitative researcher will use a literary style that is "evocative and graceful" while assuming the voice "of a third-party scribe reporting directly on the life of the observed." Lancy summarizes by suggesting that the "use of the vernacular, verbatim quotes, and precisely detailed observations all serve to convey that the author is merely a 'translator,' and that the story is the natives' own." (p. 22) He went on to acknowledge van Manen's concerns of the danger of merely "reporting" the facts without making the extra effort to reflectively analyze and present the data (p.22).

In order to analyze and present the data effectively, one must determine what the levels of analysis should be in the research. Lancy once again was helpful in making the distinction between two levels when analyzing qualitative data:

> . . . classics in the field like Becker et al. (1961) and Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggest that one works from the bottom up, breaking the data into the smallest pieces possible, then systematically coding and collating all the lower level (grounded) categories, and then moving upward to seek meaningful, larger aggregates. (p. 21)

In line with this, I determined that my analyses would explore first level categories and then second level themes. It might be helpful at this point to have a definition of a theme. Van Manen (1990) suggests:

1) a theme is the experience of focus, of meaning, of point.

2) theme formulation is at best a simplification

3) themes are intransitive (not objects one encounters only at a certain point in the text)

4) theme is the form of capturing the phenomenon one tries to understand.

Themes are, in other words, "golden threads" which are woven through the experiences of the presidents to heighten our understanding of their role.

Validity and Generalizability

Maxwell (1992) contends that "*understanding* is a more fundamental concept for qualitative research than validity (p. 281). For this section I have relied on Maxwell's five kinds of understanding that accounts (data) can embody, particularly with respect to: descriptive validity, interpretive validity, theoretical validity, generalizability, and evaluative validity:

> 1. Descriptive validity. Providing a factual account, without distorting what was seen or heard.
>
> 2. Interpretive validity. Seeking to "comprehend phenomena not on the basis of the researcher's perspective and categories, but from those of the participants in the situation being studied . . . grounded in the language of the people . . . rely[ing] on their own words."
>
> 3. Theoretical validity. . . .whether there is consensus within the community concerned with the research about the terms used to characterize the phenomena.
>
> 4. Generalizability. There are two aspects: (1) generalizing within the community, group, or institution studied to persons, events . . . that were not directly observed or interviewed; and (2) generalizing to communities, groups or institutions." In other words, what Maxwell later refers to as internal generalizability for the former and external generalizability for the latter.
>
> 5. Evaluative validity. This type of validity "involves the application of an evaluative framework to the objects of study rather than a descriptive, interpretive or explanatory one" (p. 285-297).

Of the five, the first two types of validity are most pertinent because of the descriptive nature of this study and since no theoretical constructs or evaluation are being attempted. My goal is to describe the experiences of college presidents, as much as possible using their own words. However, I believe that generalizability is also

applicable, with the following proviso: Lincoln and Guba (1982) suggest that the generalizations in the context of qualitative research are actually "working hypotheses," and that "generalizations are impossible since phenomena are neither time- nor context-free" (p. 238). They do go on to acknowledge, however, that some transferability of these hypotheses may be possible, depending on the context. It is with this understanding that I will speculate there may be some level of "generalizability" as it is limited to individuals involved in higher education who have experience in a leadership role of a similar or related capacity.

Participants

The participants were five college presidents from one Western Canadian province from both private and public institutions. The presidents (Buchman, Sawatzky, Mercer, McLeod, and Smith) came from a variety of academic backgrounds - social sciences, hard sciences, and education. Four presidents were "primus inter pares" or first among equals, having exchanged an academic career for the presidency, while one came to the post with more experience from a student services orientation; he had less academic experience. Two of the presidents considered themselves to be students of the discipline of higher education. The participants are married and ranged in age from the late 40s to early 60s. They have been in the presidency from four to fourteen years; four of the participants have an earned doctorate. Two of the presidents came to their new position from within the college. I was impressed with the warmth and openness which each president exuded during our conversations.

Data Collection

Each potential participant received a letter of introduction from my research supervisor as well as a second letter from me inviting his participation in the study (Appendix B & C). Data were collected from five male college presidents who indicated a willingness to participate in the study and who were accessible to me. In other words, purposive sampling was used (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

Informed consent was mentioned in my letter of introduction and gained prior to the initial interview with participants. The first interviews were approximately one hour in length. Our conversations were taped, transcribed by me and coded into meaning units.

The guiding questions for the interviews with college presidents were meant to identify the participants' primary impressions of their experiences in a main leadership role at an institution of higher education, funded either privately or publicly. The interview schedule (Appendix A) provided minimal structure to the interviews and allowed numerous "jumping off" points. My desire was to engage each president in a "conversation with a purpose" as opposed to the strict question and answer process of a structured interview.

After some time to reflect on the first conversations and develop some additional questions, a second interview was arranged with all participants. As with the first interview, the second interviews were taped, transcribed and coded by me. I was particularly interested in comments from the presidents—stories, opinions, descriptions— that were repeated in both the first and second interviews. These comments I considered to be most salient, and were therefore, the comments I focused upon first.

Due to the busy schedules of the presidents, I opted not to use valuable interview time to go over the transcripts from our first conversation and decided instead to use the time available to engage the presidents with additional questions about their experiences. As a result, transcripts of both interviews were not given to each participant for review as part of the process in this study.

Data Analysis

A reflective journal was maintained and field notes were also made. The field notes were dictated immediately after I left the interviews. They were transcribed verbatim and incorporated into my analysis.

The data were analyzed employing the following process. After I transcribed the tapes from the two interviews, I checked the accuracy of the transcripts by listening back to the tapes. The transcripts were then read again and coded into general meaning units as individual words or phrases represented a particular idea. The analysis process involved searching the transcripts for their manifest content or some undertone which could be incorporated in describing the experiences of college presidents (Berg, 1995, p.111). The basic tactic employed was constant comparative (Glaser & Strauss, 1967); initially I worked "from the bottom up", collating the meaning units into lower level categories (Lancy, 1993, p.21). I searched for common properties amongst the responses from the participants.

The next phase was to identify themes—groupings of categories that seemed to be related. Or, as Lancy states, "moving upward [one analytical level] to seek meaningful, larger aggregates" (Lancy, 1993, p. 21). Both categories and the later themes were determined by either a commonality of experience amongst all

presidents, or when some of the presidents seemed to refer to a particular idea repeatedly, which led me to believe it should be highlighted. This particular phase in the research addresses van Manen's (1988) concern about a report remaining but a "literary tale" if the story is simply presented without "the reality being sliced, diced, and served up analytically" (Lancy, 1993, p. 22). It is the suggesting of themes emerging from the data that should enhance a greater understanding of and appreciation for the college presidency.

Ethics

A letter explaining the purpose and nature of the research was mailed to participants. The letter also indicated the participant's right to opt out of the study at any time (Appendix C). Informed consent was obtained from participants in person prior to the first interview, after the goals of the research and the participants' right to opt out were reviewed. I assigned pseudonyms for all five participants, in order to assure their anonymity and confidentiality.

The data were kept secure in my office and will be destroyed upon completion of the investigation.

Chapter 4

Findings

The findings describe the experiences of the college presidents. There are four main themes which will be presented. First, the job is relentless in its complexity. Second, the relational style of the president reveals his character. The third theme is how the presidents deal with the demands of the job. Fourth, how the presidents maintain a healthy perspective on the role. While the first theme serves as a suitable introduction to the scope of the experience of the presidency and the second theme reveals the character of the president in his relationships, the third and fourth themes could be considered a culmination of the first two themes. They expose the effects of dealing with the weight of the presidency and the challenges involved and illuminates how the presidents cope with the demands of their role.

Two things are important to note as we begin this chapter. First, the findings came out of a semi-structured interview format that evolved throughout the interview process. Second, rather than introduce five individual presidents, I thought it best to present some of their experiences in a more general context.

The Job is Relentless in its Complexity

The job is "exciting one minute and a disaster the next;" part of the complex nature of the job has to do with how the president is perceived by internal and external constituencies. There are particular roles a president must fulfill, the primary ones dealing with raising funds and marketing the college. Not only is there obvious work for presidents with constituents outside of the college, but with internal

constituents—faculty, staff and students—where the president cultivates community, communicates vision and values and attempts to take care of personnel.

Exciting One Minute; A Disaster the Next:

The following quotes give an immediate picture of the role—painted in extremes:

> Mercer: It's the most stimulating, exciting, challenging, creative, frustrating job that I could imagine. I've got the best job in the world. I don't think there's a better job. As I say, it's continually self-motivating. (3a.135/143)
>
> Buchman: I think it's fascinating, exciting, it's a roller coaster, it can be tremendously satisfying one minute and absolutely a disaster the next. The emotional ride is up and down. (1b.950-951)
>
> Smith: I enjoy it, I enjoy it . . . I think it's a fine job, it's a challenging job, it has many, many fine features and I enjoy doing it.
> Int: Satisfying?
> Smith: Yeah. I mean, you do it as well as you can and I'm sure there are things you can do better, but I feel good about what's happening and about the role I can play. (5a.556-562)
>
> McLeod: On the whole, it's very rewarding, [but] if you ask at any particular hour of the day I could be at my wit's end saying "Let's leave!" (4a. 48-51)

Perception vs. Reality

The presidents I talked with all had comments regarding people's perceptions of what their job is really like; they described how the role is understood and said how they would like the role to be understood.

The general outsider's view of the president's office lacks an accurate awareness of the diverse nature of the role, as well as the tendency of some people to label the president with "ascribed motives." The following quotes are representative of how two of the presidents feel about the way various constituencies view the top

academic post. The first addresses what is thought to be a basic ignorance or lack of knowledge regarding the presidential role, the second reflects the cynical and adversarial nature of some people's attitudes and beliefs when it comes to viewing the presidency.

> Buchman: I think the one things that probably would be quite surprising to 98% of people would be if they were asked to describe what a president of a university does, there would be very little by the way of accuracy, of real life—even for most of my colleagues, I suspect. They have no idea. I mean, my assistant has come to me from another department just a year ago, and she is still saying, "I can't believe the variety, the pressures, the demands, the excitement." (1b.540-545)

> Mercer: One of the fascinating things of being the president . . . is that you carry around alot of ascribed motives and ascribed behaviours that are in the minds of other people. They carry with them a stereotype image. "I know what you get your kicks out of, it's probably firing people. And the more you can do it, the more you can screw people around, the better you feel you are as an administrator, right? I know what you're like!" (laughter) That attitude exists with some people. (3b.510-520)

In addition, being misperceived or misinterpreted can have negative repercussions, thus contributing to the complexity of the role. The following quotes continue to heighten the sense of complexity of the job in terms of what the president may say or do.

> Smith: This is a public job, and you're aware of the fact that the things that you do and say, especially the things you say, have repercussions. It's scary to think that if you make an off-hand remark about something, somewhere—even in the hall—somebody picks it up . . . and somehow it becomes institutional policy. (5b. 599-602)

> Buchman: The complexities of the issues is one thing that people don't understand. Like your problem is always the most important one, and it's important while we're here together. And then you leave the room and somebody else's problem becomes my problem, but your problem is still your problem. You're wondering why the hell I haven't done anything about it. . . . So, it's the complexity, the challenge of collegial decision making, the setting of agendas that are knocked out by other factors beyond which you have no control. The political process. The intensity—that's a huge factor, is the

> intensity. My wife and I have tried to think of words to describe it, it's *relentless*; you never, never finish and there's always something else.
>
> Mercer: My job is I'm a teacher. And my job is to facilitate the teaching/learning process in the college. By facilitate, that's a damn hard job. That means I have an overview of a multi-million budget operation . . . trying to see that all of those various [budget] components are in some kind of a consolation heading in certain direction. I work with board members, for example, over a period of three to six years as a teacher, teaching them how to be board members, teaching them about the college and teaching them about educational principles, management organizational principles. (3b.541-546/ 555-564)
>
> Smith: I think that internally what you would like to communicate to people is . . . that the president doesn't unilaterally and autocratically and capriciously make decisions which have major effects on people. Secondly, that the job involves balancing interests . . . which requires give and take. [As for] the community that we serve, I wish that they would be more aware of what the educational process is about, and what my role in it is. There are people out there who see the president; they have too lofty a perception of what a president can do. (5b.986-997)
>
> Sawatzky: [To external constituents, I try to explain] that you cannot operate a school today like [when you were in school]. . . Now, they still don't like [that response to their concerns]. But I try to point out that even though my philosophy, in all honesty, is similar to theirs, I am not convinced that it works now. . . Our goal is that we are here to help students. And it's my firm belief that what we are doing is a better approach than what [constituents often] are suggesting. (2b. 759-766)

There is a sense of the pendulum swings in the rhythm of the presidency; the speed and intensity varies, depending on what is required of the president at that moment. What follows are a few examples of kinds of the things that contribute to the complexity of the president's role.

Raising Funds

Two presidents really enjoy the fundraising aspect of their jobs, while the others had to develop the ability to function in this role. The presidents re-frame the

activity of fundraising to "making friends", building relationships with individuals who are capable of making a substantial gift to the institution.

> Mercer: Fundraising— I see my main job as promoting the image of the college, and fundraising is kind of an offshoot of that. I cannot say that I enjoy sitting down with you and asking if you would consider making a gift of $25,000 to the college. I just don't feel comfortable doing that. Although I basically have oriented myself to say "That's part of my job-it's important I do it and do it well." So, I do it. (3a.247-251)

> Sawatzky: I'm not a guy, and I have to do some of this, who finds it easy to ask people for money. So, I struggle with that sort of thing. I suppose that's probably one of the tougher things, to get ahold of somebody and try to squeeze some dollars out of them. Certainly it's not that you just all of a sudden go to someone and ask them for a big gift, you've got to a lot of cultivating first. (2a. 499,503-505)

The different experiences that presidents have had with being a fund-raiser perhaps indicates their various outlooks on the role. President McLeod contended there are many different sides to fundraising, and recognized that the process involves "making friends" before it can involve asking for money. McLeod is committed to engaging people, creating interest, and inviting involvement in the college "no strings attached." The rationale? "Ultimately, I'm most concerned that they have understood and cared about what we care about... And if we can get that far I'm just very pleased" (4b.431-447). There are times when a potential donor will wish to speak to the president or when the president may be the only one to gain access to particular companies or individuals. This was illustrated in McLeod's contention, "The president must accept and appreciate that part of the responsibility of the presidential role. It's a given. He or she who does not aspire to see that as part of it cannot do an effective job" (4b.471-472).

Similarly, Smith concurred and suggests this is perhaps one of the most important roles of the president, to translate institutional needs into new funds:

> You have the pressure of going out and trying to raise the funds, wherever they come from—from the government, from our supporting community, in terms of tuition and so on. So to match all of those needs with the limited resources and to try and translate those needs into new funds. (5b. 736-746)

Being involved in the various stages of raising funds, either "making friends" or cultivating a major gift, can take up a significant amount of time for these presidents. This role, while it did not initially appeal to all of the presidents, is vital to ensuring the future viability of the colleges. There is no option to delegate this job in most cases, since the president is the person that major donors expect to speak with before making any commitments. As a result, three of the presidents had to make an adjustment in terms of their view of this particular role, deciding to be good at it. Just as some presidents are more comfortable in the role of being a fund-raiser, some presidents also had to grow into the role of public relations practitioner.

Marketing the College

For some presidents, fulfilling the public relations function was a stretch at first. President Mercer commented, "I really enjoy doing [the PR function], but I had to learn how to do it. It wasn't a natural thing for me. [Now I'm at] a point where I would say that I get a kick out of selling the college" (3a. 252-254). Similarly, President McLeod shares his enthusiasm for his institution with anyone, anywhere: "From a marketing perspective it's easy to sell something you believe in... if I had anybody stopping me in the street—K-days— wherever, my instant reaction is 'Let me tell you about it.' So that part is very easy" (4b.428-431). The public relations function extends beyond the meetings with individuals and groups at events or formal functions to the presentation of college in electronic and print media. One president spoke about his role in helping to maintain the image of the institution.

President Smith insists on being on his college's editorial committee in order to better deal with any constituency concerns arising from college publications.

> We discuss the way things are written. But the tone is I really want to see [outgoing publications] because when there's a question out there, it comes back to me. I can say that I wrote [the story in question] or I saw it and OK'd it. If there's something in there that I regret, I say that. I say we shouldn't have written it that way, but then at least I can blame myself instead of blaming someone else. (5a.520,528-533)

Smith recognizes that in a larger institution the public relations office would look after much of this kind of work. In most institutions, however, the president is viewed as the main institutional spokesperson. As a result, he or she has to take responsibility for everything that is communicated to the public (5a.537-551).

Cultivating Campus Environment

One of the most complex tasks for the presidents involved maintaining and nurturing the campus environment. This is accomplished through a number of intentional efforts, including taking care of personnel and communicating a sense of shared mission.

Taking care of personnel.

Personnel issues are complex in their very nature. The presidents talked at length about the importance of taking care of faculty and staff, valuing them and ensuring, as much as possible, that employees find their work challenging and rewarding.

Reflecting on the importance of assembling the right mix of faculty in a particular department, President McLeod spoke about maintaining an overview of the institution, and having good people put into place who are really effective.

> It's a cliché about working yourself out of a job, that's not really what it is because the job will always be there. But it has to do with your overall sense of where it's headed and also helping to see in detail how areas need to be strengthened and encouraged—then standing aside and letting it happen. There are a lot of things that are happening on a daily basis I have no idea what they are. I trust that the people we've hired will do their jobs so I don't have to worry. (4a.294-304)

Not only does the president often play a role in the appointment of key personnel, the president also needs to give the new person some latitude in fulfilling his or her new role.

> Smith: It's very important that you have people who feel that they are contributing independently and creatively. We just hired a new person in student life. I said to him, "I hope that you will look at [our program] critically and I hope that you can maintain some of it. But at the same time, I want you to think about what you think we should be doing, and come and talk to me about it and I'll support you in new ventures and creative ideas." (5b.833-841)

Similarly, not only having good people but being able to retain them for a significant period of time, without the threat of them being stolen away by other institutions was cited as an issue by Buchman:

> You have to look over the senior team of people you're trying to put together and say, "Have we a good balance of disciplines, temperaments, strengths, compensation for weaknesses, or lack of experience" those kinds of things. I think that's one of the difficulties in the university today is trying to keep the team together, because if you have good people, they're going to be picked off by other people. (1a.107-111)

Taking care of personnel is an important aspect of the job and contributes to the complex nature of the president's role. In a way, taking care of personnel enables the president to ask something of the entire campus—a commitment to the institutional mission.

Communicating mission, vision and values.

In order for the institution to be effective, not only must the president establish certain conditions within the organization, but he or she must also endeavor to elicit a certain response from staff and faculty. At the most basic level, this response is in support of the institutional mission,. All the presidents talked about the importance of having faculty and staff who were reliable and committed to helping the institution fulfill its mission. This is how one president reflected for a moment on what such a commitment costs individual members of the community:

> Buchman: We are asking people to be [institutional] people, and this is really tough. It's tough for anyone in any circumstance to put away your own self interest and look at what's good for the whole which may be against your position . It's not only true but it's enforced in tough economic times when we're all concerned about the dollar and where it's going. So, you ask people to make a sacrifice, to look at the whole picture in the longer term issues. (1a.379-383)

In order to foster such a commitment from the faculty and staff of the college, the president creates an environment that is complimentary by communicating particular values. Similarly, the presidents mentioned working towards conditions of excellence, total quality principles, and openness. Reflecting on their experiences, all of the presidents talked about employees and dealing with change, along with encouraging debate on principles, not personal issues. Here are some examples:

> Buchman: Some of our people are having a tough time accepting we're in a period of change. They think, "Well, if we only get rid of the president and Ralph Klein, then we'll go back to where it was with Peter Lougheed," and these days are just so much different. On the other hand, you've got lots of really good people who are doing exciting things. And they're just totally turned on by that. So a condition that encourages inquiry and debate, and doesn't try to muffle it or squash it, so that issues are debated on principle, not on personal issues. (1a.395-407)

> Smith: Education is changing so quickly. . . my role will be to make sure that [the expertise we need] is here. . . [and] that there are opportunities for

> learning among our staff and faculty to manage all these changes. (5b. 886-892)
>
> Sawatzky: We're here to serve the students and respect the students. Whether they respect me or not, I need to respect them. And that in light of what our work here is, and the fact that they're paying and we're here to serve them, they have a right to the very best that we can give them, in the preparation of classes, beginning on time, and getting assignments and tests back on time. So, to strive to do the very best that one can in [any] responsibility which is theirs. (2a.229-235)
>
> McLeod: People who work with people have to expect other people not to be at their best. And so you're hoping your people and organization also have patience in the ability not to be over reactive when one of the students or others—family members—might be upset about something. So another condition is basically: not only the lack of aggression toward others' inappropriate [behavior] but also the need to have patience with aggression when it's coming your way. (4b. 569-574)

Other objectives in creating a healthy campus environment include avoiding situations that would reflect poorly on the organization. President Mercer mentioned the importance of being highly organized in order to best serve the people who are being affected. For example, ensuring that if people expect Convocation to start at 2:00pm, then it should start then, and not at 2:30 or 3:00pm. "People are relying on us to be efficient. People who are relying on you or your service or your system, they have a right to expect that it's going to be done—well done" (3a.211-223).

Summary

The first theme serves as an appropriate overview of the complexities involved in the presidential role. Raising funds, "making friends", taking care of personnel and sharing an organizational vision serve to describe the role in broad brush strokes. Many of these complexities will be dealt with in greater depth as we consider the other themes conveying the experience of being a college president.

The Relational Style of the President Reflects His Character

All five presidents demonstrated not only most of the skills required to fulfill the role, but the style necessary to function at a higher level than simply accomplishing tasks. This style is reflective of the individual's beliefs and values and how they influence the way a president operates in the role.

Connecting with Faculty, Staff and Students

Part of doing an effective job as president included gathering information or feedback from various constituencies. The presidents talked about listening to their staff, allowing them to feel like they've really been heard, even when what they want is unrealistic or impossible to provide. There was a sense of a caring ethic, a sensitivity to people's questions and comments. For example, president Buchman initiated a process for meeting with small groups of junior faculty members—a group of eight to ten, all from different departments—over a brown bag lunch. The purpose of the meeting was to put them at ease. Buchman recognizes that newer faculty members have the tendency to feel remote as a group on campus; he meets with them not only to make a connection but to invite them to participate in where the institution is headed.

> I say "Tell me what your concerns are, I think I have a thick skin, so be critical of what we're doing and not doing, what would you do differently, what are your most fanciful rumors you'd like to either have dispelled or confirmed? How do you feel about yourself, as a member of the college community, what's your mood right now, and what can we do for you?" It's a very refreshing experience and for the hour and ten minutes I'm totally lost in that room, I'm not thinking about anything else. It's wonderful.

Buchman is also realistic about these kinds of meetings with various departments that not only provide a good source of feedback, but create expectations among faculty

and staff that having had their concerns heard, action would follow immediately. What is required is a balanced perspective, and the recognition that such information gathering may negatively affect one's credibility.

> You have to look at yourself and say, "Maybe that will not add to my reputation in the end because everyone's going to say, this guy consulted with us about our program but didn't do anything... he's no better than the rest of them." So, there's a downside to that, too. (1a. 415-430/445-446)

President Smith's comments emphasized the idea of engaging faculty and staff through the process of consultation:

> Smith: . . . An institution like this is very consultative. That can be a pain in the neck in some ways. You are always talking, always checking back and you're always discussing—and there are so many interests that need to be taken care of. But that also is its strength, because it forces you to communicate, it forces you to listen to each other. You need to develop the mechanisms for doing that. Sometimes we fail and sometimes we succeed. (5a. 362-367)
>
> McLeod: Everything that precedes [working collaboratively with colleagues on a project] and everything that follows is a tremendous amount of networking and effort going into it. (4a.72-74)

Similarly, one of the highlights for Sawatzky was being able to relate to students, "I think one of the real pluses is the association and the opportunity that you have to work with young people" (2a. 64-65). Sawatzky also talked about building relationships with young people, when possible, so as to be in relationships with students as they mature. "There are some [students], of course, who have their challenges, but you just need to be able to have a part, and to leave some time to help them to re-direct and get on with things" (2a. 65-67).

Perhaps the most significant points of connection, which happens to be one of the biggest pluses and rewards for college presidents, comes at graduation. President Buchman finds the day to be quite moving. "I sometimes feel very emotional for

students that I know that have achieved. And every one of them— I look at the parents and think how exciting this must be— I've gone through it myself with our own kids" (1a.361-366).

Connecting with faculty, staff and students seems to be important to these presidents. They all want to make the effort to stay in touch with the people associated with their institutions. One of the ways this was accomplished was by maintaining an open administrative posture.

The presidents expressed an earnest desire to have a deeper, more meaningful level of communication with the rest of the campus than currently exists. President Buchman defined it is as having an open administration, meaning that "you give people as much by way of fact that they want." The kinds of elements that are present in such an environment include, "an openness, an accessibility to information, an opportunity to sit down in many informal ways and talk about solutions, to anticipate problems, and try to gather in the problem solvers," according to Buchman, who then provided this illustration:

President Buchman told the story of his annual meeting with the incoming Student Council executive where he, along with his VPs, try to build a positive working relationship with the students. In addressing the Student Executive, the president would suggest to them that they have a short term fix on many issues which the president has had more experience with—not out of a paternalistic sense—but in order to suggest a way of dealing with the issues in an appropriate manner. By asking "What issues can we work together on?" and acknowledging that there will be issues, like tuition fees, where the students and the administration are going to differ, the

president can suggest that it is okay to differ as long as the "ground rules" have been established.

> If we do anticipate differing, let's realize we're differing on different points of philosophy, or principle, or pragmatism from a point of view of survival — either you or us. But for heaven's sake, let's work from a common data base. So I've always said to the students, "If you want stuff on fees, you want the budget, you want to run different options by way of computer programs, come and see the VP finance, he'll open the books for you" and that kind of thing. (1b.624-636)

Similar to the open administration theme, president Sawatzky personalized his response by talking about his philosophy of the "open door."

> Sawatzky: I like to work within an environment where my door's open to faculty, staff, and students, which I think I do get a lot of. I believe that in our work we're here to serve. We're here because the students come. Because they're here, our job is to meet their needs . . . that's our function, we're here to serve. And so, that's an emphasis we make with faculty and staff, we attempt to meet those needs when that's required. (2a.195-200)

President Sawatzky also referred to creating an environment wherein employees feel appreciated. (2a.214-219) Aside from appreciating the contributions of employees, some of the presidents talked about the polarization that becomes apparent when reconciling departmental needs and wants with budget realities. President Smith commented that while there may be points where disagreement may arise and may become very personal and entrenched, his goal in these kinds of situations is to foster a climate of understanding and good relations among faculty and between faculty and students and between faculty and administration.

> I think academically, an institution like this, it's very consultative. That can be a pain in the neck in some ways. I mean you're always talking, always checking back, and you're always discussing. And there are so many interests that need to be taken care of. But that also is its strength, because it forces you to communicate, it forces you to listen to each other and—so, you need to develop the mechanisms for doing that. Sometimes we fail and sometimes we succeed. (5a.347-367)

Another aspect of connecting with faculty and staff is communicating vision and values. The following quotes illustrate common values in reference to cultivating a sense of shared student-centred mission amongst the entire campus community, having employees that are self-directed and who cooperatively work within a climate of mutual respect and fair treatment.

> McLeod: I would endeavor to assist in every possible way, people who are in place, to help them see their role within the mission of the College and to get their advice on how we might improve in those areas. You want people who are really gifted in the area where they are serving and happy in the areas that they are serving. . . . My role ultimately is to make sure that is taking place. (4b.537-548)

> Sawatzky: We're here to serve the students and respect the students. Whether they respect me or not, I need to respect them. And that in light of what our work here is, and the fact that they're paying and we're here to serve them, they have a right to the very best that we can give them, in the preparation of classes, beginning on time, and getting assignments and tests back on time. So, to strive to do the very best that one can in [any] responsibility which is theirs. (2a.229-235)

> Smith: We need to be very vigilant about the mission of the institution. Not only about the words, but about the practice of it... that we are truly fulfilling the mission that we set for ourselves to accomplish. (5a. 275-277)

> Mercer: If you have a group or people who are new, who are not familiar with the work and not confident in their abilities and so on, [or] where you have a situation where people are unwilling, it is appropriate to be directive. What you try to do with that group of people is lead them along to a point where they can be self-directive. (3a.233-236)

> Buchman: We have lots of people here—and I'm talking about staff as well as faculty—who we should encourage to reach their potential. It should be an exciting life for them. And for many of them it isn't right now, it's stressful and frightening in some cases. But normally, in normal times, they should be able to fulfill their expectations and their potential. (1b.820-824)

> McLeod: Our whole environment is "respect one another." That's the bottom line. And care for one another, respect for one another— for where people are coming from. So, if I'm finding harassment or general lack of courtesy on the part of staff towards students or, I guess, the reverse as well, anywhere, then we will look at that to see that it is stopped. (4b.555-559)

Connecting with faculty and staff is also affected by the degree to which the college president is able to maintain credibility with them. President Smith commented on the importance of being seen as credible in the eyes of staff and particularly faculty:

> You must also understand where they're coming from and be able to say to them, "I know what it's like to teach 12 hours a week and I know what it's like to prepare your classes and I know what it's like to prepare proposals for research." You have to be able to assess what they do in a knowledgeable way. [However], as soon as people find out that your assessment is somewhat shallow or comes out of a different milieu [non-academic], then you lose credibility. (5a.85-90)

President Smith commented that any action taken or comment that was perceived to be purely financially motivated or lacking in deference to the academic enterprise could have a negative effects on the president's relationship with faculty.

President Buchman commented on credibility in terms of trying to find the balance between gathering information from within the institution and generating unrealistic expectations that you will be able to address all the comments and concerns you receive:

> Buchman: I went out and was the first president for years to go out into all the units and listen. They all thought I was going to do everything they suggested. Of course, it's impossible. So it has to be a balance. You have to look at yourself and say, " I know they're going to go out there and think we're gonna change this and that, and maybe that will not add to my reputation in the end because everyone's going to say, "This guy consulted with us about our program but didn't do anything—he's no better than the rest of them." So, there's a downside to that, too. (1a. 437-446)

The four presidents who came from academic backgrounds in teaching and administration all commented on the "instant credibility" that is afforded to them by their respective faculties; such recognition comes from having had significant previous academic experience, and being perceived as understanding the faculty better than an administrator without such an academic background.

Making the effort to connect with people and maintaining an open administrative posture are important elements to the relational styles of the presidents. The presidents' ability to connect with people is affected by such things as their ability to trust, influence and encourage.

Trusting.

One of the ways that a president's character was revealed in relationships was the extent to which he dealt with issues of trust. A college president is often seeking advice when he is considering the next reasonable course of action. It is often the case that in seeking new information or a fresh perspective, someone must be trusted to keep a confidence. As obvious and simple as this sounds, it is indeed often easier said than done. President Buchman reflected on trusting people and the matter of maintaining confidences in the context of problem solving and dealing with sensitive issues. Having strong convictions about what a confidence is, Buchman has encountered people who say they can keep a confidence but then demonstrate their inability to do so. So what does keeping a confidence mean to President Buchman? "It means you take that to the grave unless I release you of that confidence. You don't tell your wife, you don't tell your friends, you don't have three drinks and spill it." He continues by talking about the reasons for taking someone into his confidence and the cost of maintaining confidences or privileged information under duress.

> [I say] "I'm telling you because I trust you," or "I need your opinion and I trust you," or "You should have this information because you'll better understand." And a lot of problems, revolve around, in a broad sense, personnel issues. It's either people or money. And usually in people you're dealing obviously with very complex situations. And sometimes you will find where an administration is in a position where we may look bad or we can't comment, simply because we're respecting confidences. And you take an awful beating over that. (1b.653-665)

The next thing I wanted to know was, "Do you automatically trust all your senior staff at the outset, or do they have to earn your trust?" Buchman's response included reference to what is required of senior staff in order to effectively lead the institution as a team. The president plays a key role in creating this type of environment, and maintaining it throughout the leadership/decision making process.

> I trust people until they show me that I couldn't trust them. But you do something that to me is illustrative of lack of trust or inappropriate behavior, I've got a memory like an elephant, and that will cut you right out of my circle as far as any sharing of any confidence goes again." No, that doesn't mean malicious behavior or punitive or retribution as far as I'm concerned.

One president has found that he can't be as trusting as he'd like to be:

> Sawatzky: I have become conscious just very recently that I believe that it's becoming more important when one is hiring individuals, engaging firms in various things... that one now has to do quite a thorough check. I like to always think the best of everybody, but you can get burned. So I suppose that's a change that I will make in light of some issues that we're facing now. But it's a part of the thing—of me—that I don't like. (2b.791-795)

Also slightly on the darker side, after going through the interview process, meeting with a number of different campus groups, and finally being elected by the Board to serve as president, an irony seems to exist. President Buchman noted that it is one thing as president to decide how much you can trust your colleagues; it is quite another when it feels like they don't trust you:

> Buchman: [It's] the old story, no one trusts the senior administration. Once you become a senior administrator, even though everybody has been involved in your appointment—and this is quite interesting—because you've got 15 or 16 people representing all the constituencies. FINALLY, they've found the president they should have had for years and years. It's "President X" and in he comes riding on a white horse into town. And the day after, whoosh—he's a senior administrator, you can't trust him! (1b.636-643)

Encouraging.

Another aspect of how the character of a president is revealed in relationships has to do with the extent to which he embraces encouragement in the midst of day-to-day activities. Most of the presidents talked about making time to recognize people who have a recent accomplishment that should be celebrated. Such presidential attention was fairly evenly distributed amongst staff and faculty. When the performance of his staff or colleagues has deserved recognition, President Buchman will contact them with a call or note of encouragement and congratulations. In the case of research, the president asks for more information in order to understand the significance of the researcher's success and be able to share the news with the Rotary Club or other groups.

> My view is I'm lucky to be here. These are terrific people. We had a good example: We asked for suggestions for efficiency so that support staff could make comments that would save us money. I got an e-mail from the VP saying they'd awarded $25 or $50 prizes to Mary and Sally for doing this and that. So I wrote both of them an e-mail in my own typing. I got a really nice reply. Some people say "Why are you wasting your time with that?" So it's a balance of things. That's why I think it's a 24 hour job; I can't do it any other way. (1b.926-940)

I had an opportunity to observe a president being an encourager. On my way to interview president Mercer, I followed him into the College from the parking lot. I was impressed with how he took time to greet everybody —custodial staff, reception personnel, some students and colleagues he passed in the hall. His mood was upbeat, his tone encouraging, his manner communicating his genuine interest in each person he came into contact with. Conversely, being in conflict with these same groups of people can be a draining experience.

President Smith reflected on encouraging employees by inviting them to contribute to the institution "independently and creatively." (5b. 834)

Influencing.

"Influencing" is a category that reveals something about the character of a president because it indicates a willingness to work through relationships, often behind the scenes. College presidents are influencers, who must at times be content with "back room" discussions and politicking in order to accomplish some things. But generally speaking, they worked through people, and often worked in the background. An example:

> Mercer: There's something that will happen, and I will cause it to happen, but very few people in the organization—not that it's important they do—know that the president was behind it. It's something that's really important. It's something that I can make happen without having to get up on a soapstand... So it'll happen, it will be there and 95-99% of the people in the organization won't know how it all happened, it just happened, and they'll feel good about it. (3b.738-742)

All presidents viewed themselves as being in a position to influence their colleges because saw themselves as a "good fit" with the institution. I sensed genuine humility, enthusiasm for the institution, and a sincere commitment from all presidents who talked about serving their schools and using their talents in what they believe to be a high calling, a responsible position. Additionally, some presidents influenced their institutions differently. The three following examples illustrate a potential for influence through a strong sense of place, by maintaining an awareness of unusual details, and through proactive planning.

> Mercer: I just consider myself extremely fortunate to have found [this type of an institution] as a place to exercise my gift. And not to say I'm more gifted than anyone else, but I have some interest in education, I'm a guy who's somewhere between truck driver and opera buff, and one or the other, depending on the time. The college is a reflection of that range of interests that I have, and my very personality. (3b.772-783)

> Smith: You don't get involved in a lot of detail, but if an unusual detail escapes you, then you're in trouble. So you need to be on the lookout for unusual things and you have to develop a sense in terms of the way students behave or in things that come from government... You have to read between the lines. What are they after? Why are they asking this? It is a question of basically being very aware of how various things can impact the health of the institution. (5a.482-488)

> McLeod: What is needed now is a tremendous amount of flexibility, responding to change, half of which is responding to circumstances beyond your control. And so you literally have to have the ability, not only to respond but to anticipate and have two or three scenarios. At the same time, maintaining your own institution's mission will keep you strongly into that mandate so that whatever is coming at you does not adversely affect what you feel you've been called to do. (4a.111-116)

In terms of influence, the following presidents draw a distinction between having real power or only apparent power in their position, and what the resulting implications are.

> Mercer: Although you can influence an awful lot, you don't have the power that a lot of people think you have...you usually have to work through a myriad of groups and people. And that's OK, that's understandable because that's the way you get by and that's the way your ideas get improved or changed or booted out. (3b.139-141)

> Buchman: You have to live with that and realize that once you have apparent power—and there's not much—or authority, or influence or more information than somebody else has, you're viewed with suspicion. And often, the more you try to deal with this, the worse it gets. (1b.647-650)

Influencing requires wisdom and insight to know how to accomplish the goal or task by using all available means. This may require some of the things already mentioned in this chapter in terms of networking or quietly working to gain faculty support.

Communicating Vision and Values

A president's character is revealed through relationships as he works to create a successful college environment. As the president engages the entire campus

community, he communicates vision and values in order to encourage the fulfillment of the institutional mission. What emerges here are some of the most closely held values of each president.

President Buchman's approach is to uphold the importance of the freedom of inquiry. "We're here to pursue new knowledge and disseminate knowledge in a situation that should be free. Freedom of inquiry is terribly important, and I'm to do everything to encourage that" (1b.796-801).

In striving to see his college become one of the best in the world, President Mercer's biggest dream is to create an environment whereby "people identify with the work, identify their self-concept with their work, and work very hard to achieve the best possible service we can for our learners, our college, and one another" (3a.108,147-151). Mercer believes that such a "health promoting" environment "puts an emphasis on people, to help them to become more self-confident, more self-directed in the sense of ownership for what we're doing" (3a.163-165). For Mercer, the main mission of the College is to respond to students who come to the institution to improve themselves through learning, by taking courses and developing skills and a knowledge base. The science and art (or craft) of responding to students' needs is never fully accomplished to its maximum potential. Mercer is a proponent of TQM - total quality management or continuous improvement, and believes, "that I can always do better, that we can always do better as an organization. There's no such thing as something that can't be improved upon"(3b.681-683).

How do you communicate this philosophy to the campus community? One way is by turning a "negative into a positive" by demonstrating to people that the institution values them as individuals and their work. Mercer illustrated by telling a

story from coaching high school football many years ago. He turned the job of dragging the blocking dummies out onto the field before every practice, something that usually went to the lowliest person associated with the team, into a point of honor. Only those players who scored a touchdown in the previous game would have the "privilege" of dragging the dummies on and off the field for the following week of practice. According to Mercer, "[Previously] people were saying, 'Poor Greg, he's got the shit-job.' [But now] if Greg scored three touchdowns last week, it was, 'Nobody touch my dummies, I'm going to carry those things in!'" I asked if there was any sort of parallel at the college.

> We have some fairly low-paid jobs as receptionists at the college, or front line people who deal with the public. And with the whole quality movement, I've asked our Director of Human Resources to look and see how we can enhance those positions in terms of how they're valued, how they're paid, to recognize that. Taking a job that in many organizations is low-level and saying, "We really value what you're doing, and the importance of what you're doing." (3b.708-729)

Demonstrating that the institution values the traditionally under-valued roles on campus is important to Mercer in creating a healthy work environment.

President Mercer talked about his view of leadership as being a process by which he works through other people to have the goals of the institution accomplished. Mercer expressed an aversion to the notion of the "charismatic leader on the white horse" who single-handedly leads. Such a leader, "does great damage in creating dependency on them rather than independency, so I would see my role as more of a facilitator, more to create the conditions whereby people can assume leadership themselves." The language used to describe the process is interesting. Rather than suggesting that the president empowers his or her employees, the president creates the conditions whereby people may choose to empower themselves.

(3a.181-199) The other four presidents all held similar views in terms of collaborating with colleagues and working with people to arrive at decisions for the most part, rather than attempting to impose their will on a particular situation.

Vision and future growth in both a qualitative and quantitative sense were tied together for all presidents as they considered the foundational values and goals they had for their respective institutions. In the midst of plans for the future, there was a recognition of the size of institution being dictated by the desired ethos of the college.

> McLeod: The biggest dream is to have the college reach its ultimate expected stature and right now we're in the midst of a Board [of Governors] feasibility on visioning. The dream is a campus probably serving around 2,000 plus. We don't want to get any larger because then we lose something about what we are. And then to have the buildings in place on a beautiful campus and well-served. And we're not there yet. (4b.490-502)

> Smith: Firstly, that the place remains true to its mission, that goes without saying. So we need to be very vigilant about the mission of the institution. Not only about the words but about the practice of it, you know, that we are truly fulfilling the mission that we set for ourselves to do. But then, in the context of that, I think this institution has to grow. (5a.275-279)

> Sawatzky: . . . I would like the institution to grow in its academic programs. Perhaps grow more in depth as opposed to adding many more. . . I still have a strong goal of the spiritual emphasis of the school, and instilling in students not just the idea of a vocation but that service is an important component of that, whatever your line of work is. We are here not only to make a living but to make a life, and also to make a life for others, and we have a part to play in that. (2b. 633-634/ 637-640)

> Buchman: . . . [continue seeking] to achieve the highest quality in whatever we're doing. (1a. 399)

> Mercer: A lot of our [future] success will depend on how well we can respond to the needs of people in these buildings out here [surrounding the campus]. And you can only do that through innovative, adaptable means of education, self-paced instructional stuff. . . . [that] we've been talking about in education for the last 20, 30, 40 years. [These are the kind of] innovations that should be taking place. (3b. 787-791)

Summary

The relational style of the president seems to reflect his character and values in terms of the desire to connect with various constituencies by maintaining an open posture, communicating trust, encouragement and taking care of faculty. A president's character is not only revealed in this context, but analyzed by staff, faculty and other observers because of the very public nature of the job. Being president means living in a "fishbowl" to an extent. Such an all-encompassing job requires particular ways of dealing with its inherent challenges.

How the Presidents Deal With the Demands of the Job

All five men have changed in at least one way since becoming president. The changes have been both positive and negative. The men acquired new skills, learned about themselves and their own limitations, and nursed wounds incurred in the midst of doing their jobs. Presidents talked about having good support professionally and personally, being proactive in terms of physical health issues and maintaining a balanced perspective. They all seem to have achieved a level of peace in the midst of the ambiguity and uncertainty that marks their position. In addition, there was the sense that the presidents enjoyed rising to the challenges the role presents. Not only is the job complex and relentless, often taking the president on an "emotional roller coaster", the challenge appears to be not only to get things done or to maintain or establish good relationships, but to survive or even thrive as president.

This third theme will be presented using seven different facets of the experience will be introduced to paint the picture. The facets are: the burden of

being responsible, feeling alone in leadership, dealing with diversity, making decisions, managing conflict, receiving criticism, and being supported in leadership.

The Burden of Being Responsible

Ultimate responsibility for the entire institution rests with the president. This is perhaps the major issue that the presidents must learn to cope with during their tenure. With this responsibility comes a measure of vulnerability and the sense of being the point man, the one on the firing line who must deal with complaints and concerns without personalizing them.

On the subject of being responsible, President McLeod offered his perspective of being charged with the responsibility of communicating to the Board, the public, and government as well as coordinating between various groups outside the College, including the Church, government, and other agencies. He says, "I'm like a bridge, which links up both internally and externally with those who are most concerned with the ultimate success and fulfillment of the College's mission" (4b.706-712).

Having this burden of responsibility creates a tension for most presidents between being perceived by constituents as the one who can solve all the problems and respond to complaints, and having little or no "hands on" responsibility for such things. President Smith elaborates:

> Sometimes it's a little tiring to always be answering for the entire operation, for all the people in the operation. I think it's bad form for a president to say, "Well, this is not my fault, it's the Registrar's fault," or, "It's the VP admin.'s fault." I don't talk about "fault" with people outside the College; I say we'll look into it and if we've made a mistake we'll correct it. But you're on the firing line as president in terms of the outside dealing with the institution. (5b.691-697)

President Buchman also notes that one of his major responsibilities is to be an information provider for constituents. Having "apparent power, or authority, or influence, or more information than somebody else has," means the president can be viewed with suspicion. "Often the more you try to deal with this, the worse it gets," offers Buchman. "People are entitled in the institution to get as much information as they possibly can and argue it from their point of view... I respect the collegial process" (1b.647-652).

Part of the experience of being a college president, then, is being responsible to answer for the entire operation, but not necessarily having a firm grip on all the specific components.

> Sawatzky: There was the idea that you feel you need to have a grasp of the whole thing since you're accountable for it. So I guess the thing I've learned is that you try to have the overall, but you can't have all of the specific pieces of it. Hopefully you can answer in the broad picture, the issues and the challenges. But when it comes to the details of some of these things, then you need to rely on the individuals whose responsibility these things are. (2b.597-601)

> McLeod: Being president is to feel the ultimate responsibility for all— finally signing my name to whatever we're working on but everything that precedes it and everything that follows is a tremendous amount of networking and effort going into it. I don't really know how to exactly explain how much pressure there is, how much change is happening in postsecondary education. (4a.72-74/ 89-90)

As well, Buchman talked about the burden of responsibility and not being able to accomplish things that were perhaps part of his own agenda.

> Buchman: I guess I must have been naive, like most new presidents, in thinking that I could set some major objectives for the institution, which I sensed from the interviews I had with the search committee and others ...you very quickly find that your objectives are quickly knocked out of the water by other people and other external forces. (1a.64-67/72)

President Sawatzky not only talked about the burden of responsibility in this context, but also the frustration of dealing with the Board at times.

> Sawatzky: It's the thing that "the buck stops here." I am the one that's answerable to the Board. The others are answerable to me. We've had some frustrations, being honest with you. The last year and a half the Board has tended to want to get into management. . . . Now, not all of them are that way, but there are some who tend to want to manage as opposed to being responsible for the management. (2a.95-102)

President Smith also reflected on the burden of responsibility when dealing with board members and other constituents.

> Smith: You're always trying to explain to people why you have set things up a certain way and then dealing with some of the risks and negative fall-out. The negatives have to do with dealing with expectations which may be unrealistic, dealing with complaints which may be unfounded—those kind of things are kind of tiring. (5a.159-160/173-175)

For president Mercer, one of his responsibilities in working with the board is to be a teacher.

> Mercer: I see myself as a teacher. I teach outside the classroom. I work with board members, for example, over a period of three to six years as a teacher, teaching them how to be board members, teaching them about the college and teaching them about educational principles, management organizational principles. I know that as a teacher, my role is essentially one of facilitating learning for students. 3b.555-560)

The sense of responsibility also included dealing with the financial burden of sustaining a college. Balancing budgets, making the payroll, eliminating outstanding debt, providing material needs for various faculties and departments—it is these kinds of issues that can hang like millstones around the neck of a college president.

> Smith: The other things that are difficult are, you know, continuous concern about finances—these kinds of things are very, very stressful. Over the years, that has improved a great deal here, but every year we still say, "What can we manage, how can we project our income realistically, how's it all going to come in?" (5a.187-193)

A related issue is that of financial constraints, brought about when an institution insists on balanced budgets, which means that many of the needs simply cannot be filled. Seeing people suffer under lack of staff, or inadequate materials, and being able to meet their needs only partially is frustrating for President Smith. "It would be nice to have a situation where you say, 'Well, whatever you need, just do it.' That's just not the way it can be done" (5a.204-210).

> Smith: You have the pressure of going out and trying to raise the funds, wherever they come from—from the government, from our supporting community, in terms of tuition and so on. So to match all of those needs with the limited resources and to try and translate those needs into new funds. (5b. 736-746)

There are a number of layers or facets to the sense of responsibility the presidents feel. In addition, feeling responsible for the financial stability of the institution and dealing with the stress involved in balancing budgets was shared by each of the presidents at some point during our conversations together. They bear the burden of ultimate responsibility for the entire institution. As well, they are on the "front lines" dealing with complaints, bridging between groups to provide information, and networking to accomplish tasks. In the midst of all these things, the president must learn how to cope while bearing up under the burden of responsibility.

Feeling Alone in Leadership

Feeling the weight of responsibility in the presidency and then having to cope with the demands of one's job in isolation would be a difficult task. The presidents experienced this sense of "aloneness" in varying degrees.

One president spoke about the sense of isolation that is part of being in the job. President Buchman, talked about the sense of distance from colleagues which

requires a particular approach. "It's a distance of...probably pragmatically driven and also one of respect for the office and one of just recognition that you can't get too close; someday you may have to discipline a person or question them, or whatever" (1a.151-153).

If some type of distance has been (or must be) established, I asked, "At what point do you have the freedom to tell your colleagues how you're doing? Similarly, how much do you tell, and to whom?"

> The more you tell people, the more they appreciate the frustrations or the challenges you have... and on the other hand, telling too much. If you really shared some of those deep down concerns, I think that you might very well cause more concern, more morale problems, more disenchantment, and so on. You have to decide what you're going to keep to yourself, what you will share with your immediate circle, and beyond that, how you will share both to get ideas and feedback and suggestion and support, and also understanding. (1b.597-606)

As a result, perhaps some of the loneliness is self-inflicted, a by-product of the position, out of a concern for one's colleagues. This is not to make the president into some kind of hero, but to simply put the job and its consequences into a realistic perspective in comparison to other real life situations. This is one president's way of maintaining a healthy perspective about why the loneliness may exist and why he allows it to persist.

> Buchman: I don't like to share my worries with even my senior people because I don't want them to get down. And that's why it's lonely, you see them working like hell, they're all stressed, they've got their own stuff to carry. I'm very lucky, I get some of the perks; I do get some of the recognition when it's good news, and often they don't. So I try not to add to their burdens, but you have to share it with somebody. Also, you have to put it into perspective. You're not the president of the United States, you're not the premier of the province, you're not . . . in the police force dealing with dreadful situations. (1b.980-986)

For president Mercer, the development of a new attitude helped him to deal with any sense of isolationism or being alone when it comes to addressing an issue:

> Mercer: I have more of an orientation now that "Hey, this is not my organization, this is our organization, and you're behavior as a faculty or support staff association or a student association is shaping the nature of this organization. And you're part of the solution to the problem, it's not just my problem. It's not my college, it's our college. Now, I can contribute, I can help out. Here's what I think..." (3b. 631-636)

Other presidents didn't see themselves as lonely or isolated in leadership. For example, President Sawatzky commented, "I've never felt lonely. I felt I've never had some answers which I wished I had, but I never felt I was alone and there weren't people I could go to. And people came to me" (2a.363-365). President McLeod holds a similar view. He commented, "I really can't say for the most part that this is a lonely job. It is in some respects, but being president at this times means being in some ways a "player/coach" (4a. 55-56). Working alongside colleagues in accomplishing particular projects and meeting deadlines gives McLeod a sense of unity with colleagues, rather than a sense of being isolated from them. However, he did say that the job is lonely "in some respects."

Dealing with Diversity

When it comes to coping with the demands of the job, particularly the sense of diversity, the presidents talked about the need to be a generalist, to be conversant with all levels of the institutional operation, not necessarily in any great depth for some areas.

> Sawatzky: . . . it's so varied, the demands being so varied. There are some areas where you wrestle and say, "I'm inadequate in this area." . . . you have to [accept that] you can't know everything about everything. You have to delegate, which I sometimes try to assume too much, although I don't meddle in people's work. (2a. 44-51)

"Being conversant" meant not only knowing information about specific departments or functions, but relating with various internal and external constituencies, effectively functioning in certain expected roles, such as fundraising, promotion, and public relations.

> Smith: Well, I think that the diversity of the job is very, is very marked. You have to be conversant with many different things, with the academic side [and] with the people-oriented sides—how to deal with staff, how to deal with both faculty and administration, fundraising, promotion, public relations, and dealing with other institutions. You have to do a lot of different things—not always in such depth—but you become conversant with all the different things. (5a.62-76)

Because of its diversity, and the networking that is required, the process of getting input from a variety of groups is seen to be quite an arduous aspect of the job. President Buchman listed the various constituencies he relates to:

> You have the students, graduate students, you have the Deans, you have the faculties, then you have the faculty members, then you have the general faculties council, here you have the senate, you have the board, you have the alumni, you have the "downtown people" whoever they are, and there's the business community or the others, and then it's the federal government or the provincial government or the cabinet minister or the local member, or the caucus or the opposition. (1a.239-240/244-248)

The diversity of the job was viewed as a plus; it is also looked upon as a minus when considering the time and energy it takes to jump from one situation to another hourly, daily, and weekly. Buchman, for example, works 80-90 hours a week, constantly jumping from one event or appointment to another. "It's tiring, it's stress-creating, it's inclusive in the sense that you don't get much time for other things" (1a.77-82). President Smith liked the diversity of his job, as well as the profile. "I think that diversity is a big plus . . . It also has a certain profile . . . some people may not enjoy that, but I have no difficulty with that" (5a.108-112).

In general, the diversity of the role is enjoyed and the reality of the accompanying stress and pressure was acknowledged by all participants. Four of the presidents spoke about their experiences after more than five years in their current position. Over the years, they have learned to adjust and cope with the demands of the job.

Making Decisions

Making decisions for the entire institution can be difficult at the best of times. Each president talked about decision making and how it is not possible to please everyone when doing so. Responses from various constituencies are an inevitable by-product of the decision making process, as is the potential for second-guessing oneself. The presidents cope with the demands of this particular part of their role by recognizing the challenges and rewards that are part of the process.

> Buchman: Every time you make a decision in the university, you alienate people who think you should have made another decision, and then you have to be able to put it behind you. Institutional decisions I can do that with. It's decisions with respect to personnel, and at the presidential level, they're very tough. You have to live with them, and sometimes you put them out of your mind for a while but they keep coming back to you. (1a.213-236)

Some of the consequences of the decision making process are dealing with responses to the decision and making adjustments for the future. Another consequence is not being able to defend the decisions that have been made, for various reasons.

> Buchman: [with respect to a particular incident] The letters I got, however, were quite sharp and raised some questions. I said, "Fine. We just didn't have time. We'll look at it again. We're going to [implement this particular strategy] for the next ten years, let's put in some guidelines to shape our efforts." First of all, you haven't got time to defend all of your decisions. Secondly, you're limited by, I hope, an ethical framework in which one is operating, dealing with individuals and also confidentiality, from a legal point. (1a.309-312/325-328)

The ability to make good decisions hopefully enables the president to solve a problem. For example, President McLeod said: "I get a lot of joy solving problems and if they have a larger scope to them, the larger the scope the more challenged I feel and the more enjoyable the experience is" (4b.468-470).

Dealing with complex issues is also viewed by president Buchman as a positive aspect of the position:

> Buchman: It's certainly challenging, to use an overworked word. There's a whole set of issues that you're aware of that we're facing, not just the College but every institution in the country, and they're very exciting to deal with, both conceptually and pragmatically (1a.38-40).

There are times when a decision needs to be made, and the institutional consensus-based model for decision making is not working. President Smith said, "Sometimes the decision has to be made and you make it, because you can always be in the eternal mode of trying to figure out what's best and not getting anywhere" (5a. 380-382). With a slightly different approach, Dr. Buchman offers this perspective from his experience:

> Most decisions don't have to be made immediately. The mistakes I have made, fairly dramatically, are ones when I have been in a hurry, maybe pushed by other people and I haven't exercised my judgment properly. Or, when I have been tired and have become impatient. I want to get rid of it [the decision]. And there should be a warning flag goes up in your head: Don't do this. Leave it. Go away, think about it over night. Take a fresh breath. (1b.832-844)

Responding to the expressed needs of individuals or departments through the decision making process must be done appropriately as possible. It is often the budgeting process that requires such sensitivity. As president Smith commented, everybody has needs: the different departments, the faculty, and the staff. Needs are presented to the budget review committee and someone, usually the president, has to

act as the gatekeeper, keeping the lid on expenditures. Any response has to avoid alienating the people making the request; their needs must be taken seriously. Smith adds, "As soon as they get the idea you don't care, then that is a very bad scene. So you need to say 'no' in ways that they understand are reasonable. So you have that pressure" (5b.729-736). Saying "no" implies that a decision has been made, based on various factors.

There is a protocol that should be followed in the decision making process because of the various constituencies involved in the institution. As President Buchman explained earlier

> Many of these are public policy issues, so you get people involved from all directions. But you often have to stop and say, "Who should be deciding this, in what order, with what consultative process, and who am I missing here?" (1a.250-252)

There are times when the internal decision making process can be difficult to negotiate when a president is trying to ensure that even a small task is accomplished. The reasons for this are as plentiful as the number of individuals that could and should be consulted. President Smith relayed a humorous example involving a spot on the carpet, and how difficult it can be deciding which of two ways to solve the problem:

> I could ask the vice president administration to ask the building manager to ask the janitor. . . Or, you see a janitor in the hall. In some situations, it's fine to say to the janitor, could you please clean that up? On the other hand, you may be in trouble, because you're bypassing someone's authority. The direct way may be the quickest way, but it may set a whole bunch of people off against you in terms of interfering with their job. So, you can't win sometimes! ((5b.640-650)

Managing Conflict: "Tattered and Torn"

Part of the presidential experience of coping with the demands of the job has been managing conflict situations. President Mercer talked about the common ground approach to bridging differing interests. Such an approach is put to the test when dealing with collective bargaining.

> You go to war with your faculty for six months of the year and then supposedly are working in harmony the other six months until negotiations start up all again and the adversarial concept being that "You're trying to undermine me, take advantage of me and I'm trying to do that to you" and so you have to dance with each other and so on to a point we're both tattered and torn. We agree on something. It's not enriching and not uplifting. It's very counterproductive. (3a.255-266)

Perhaps one of the reasons the collective bargaining process is so counter productive is the fact that such a process is incongruent with trying to establish an environment where the institution is trying to send a different message to students. President Mercer adds, "We are going to model ways in which organizations should be run because we know you're learning from that and we don't want you to go out of here schizophrenic" (3a.285-292).

There are potential conflict situations in dealing with a Board of Governors, other groups, or individuals. President Mercer said that even having worked with the Board to reduce the chances of them "leading you down the garden path. Sometimes I'll go home from a meeting and be ready to tear the little hair I have left out" (3b.597-601).

Managing conflict is definitely part of the experience of being a college president. Some presidents appeared to be more comfortable with conflict and ambiguity than others.

> Sawatzky: I'm one, maybe to a fault, that I do try to avoid conflict. And there may be sometimes when I ought to be more aggressive. (2a.239-240)

> McLeod: Both [not over reacting to people who are upset and being patient when in a conflict situation] are involved in being really service-oriented and trying to help other people then, to be at their very best. It's a whole ethic of service. (4b.578-79)

The presidents are able to maintain a healthy perspective about conflict and recognize that being "free" to get into conflict situations with colleagues and constituents can have a positive effect on relationships and ultimately the institution.

Personnel problems were also mentioned as one of the areas that can be draining and time consuming. President McLeod also viewed these kinds of situations as ultimately satisfying when some kind of resolution can be reached.

> McLeod: Hopefully the problem is resolvable, that would be the ideal, and everybody wins and you move on. Occasionally things aren't working out as well and something has to be done about it. Those are draining. It's the surprise element I guess I don't particularly initially appreciate. But once it's there, I sense realism about those sorts of things. So you spend time on it and then comes the reward of having worked those things through too. (4b.484-490)

A reward of guiding a conflictual situation through to a positive resolution is provided believe. This situation was embraced by the president as an opportunity for a "teachable moment", rather than simply an opportunity to respond in kind. President Buchman was disappointed with the actions of a junior colleague. Buchman chose to use the occasion as an opportunity to explain his perspective rather than simply writing a note to the individual, criticizing their actions.

> Buchman: I was ticked off with what happened with a young person the other day who should have done something for me and just left it with me. Well, he's not going to get away with that. But he's not going to get a note from me, I'm going to call him and say, come in here, let's just explore what you did and why you left this with me and now why am I saying to you, if I were you I would have done it differently? (1b.898-902)

Receiving Criticism

Responding to criticism is arguably a main function of the president or CEO of an organization. College presidents receive criticism from both internal and external constituencies, often for very different reasons. The following quotes share perspectives on coping with criticism from both sides.

> Buchman: One of the criticisms I receive of my own performance is that I don't speak up enough against the government. And [at faculty meetings I have] said, "Occasionally I do, and that's a political judgment—I have to pick my moments. I'm sorry if it doesn't match your expectations." I have learned that in most cases, you don't gain anything by doing that. Particularly on a regular basis. All you do is irritate, alienate. (1b.760-767)

President Buchman also spoke about receiving constructive criticism which can have a positive effect. "You try to get people around you who will tell you to your face that there's something wrong here. And if you're listening and if they're right, then you try to make an adjustment to your course" (1b.787-795). Similarly, Buchman talked about his thoughts in response to a note he had received from a faculty member.

> He's just feeling his way and he has a point. He's also angry. I'm now trying to write—and that's the damn trouble—it takes me a long time because I don't want to inflame a situation. On the other side, I was tempted to write a one-liner: "Why the hell don't you walk in my shoes for a week and you'd know that this isn't as simple as you bloody well think it is?" But, for the most part, you try to be tolerant, really. (1b.887-897)

President Sawatzky believes that receiving criticism is inevitable when a vocal constituency wishes to express its views about the institution being effective. Any comments relating to programs and the college in general are not taken personally; it's part of keeping good relations between the college and constituency. Sawatzky frames such comments by recognizing "One can always do something better. I hope I don't rationalize things away, but it's like some people who have the best knowledge

on how to raise kids don't have any." (2a.439-441) However, being on the front-line can also put one on the defensive, according to President Smith.

> We have a supporting community that's very interested in the college but that is also critical. Their interest is matched by a sometimes constructive but also sort of negative criticism. They shoot before they ask questions, so it puts you on the defensive. I've had to learn to deal with that by asking them to explain what the problem is . . . I then offer to go over with them why we do the things that we do. It could well be something fell through the cracks. You learn to relativize the thing rather than seeing it as a personal attack. (5b.705-710)

One of the potential dangers of attempting to cope with criticism is internalizing it. President Smith's comments exemplify the sentiments of the other presidents, who all admitted to various degrees of internalizing their institutional troubles and triumphs.

> Smith: I tend to identify with the college and its well-being—perhaps more than I should. I internalize its problems and I also internalize its successes. When people criticize the institution, or when they have problems with it or concerns, then you also internalize those concerns. You have to learn not to do that. You have to learn to [distance] yourself from those things and say, well, we do the best we can. We'll try to take the blame for mistakes as a community and we will try to deal with people internally if they fail. (5b.701-725)

Internalizing institutional problems seems like something that is inevitable for all of presidents. What are some of the ways in which the presidents do try to cope with the demands of the job?

Being Supported in Leadership

All five college presidents talked about receiving support from various constituencies during the course of their leadership. Such support and counsel provided much appreciated encouragement and perspective, thus enabling the president to better cope with the demands of the job. For one president, it had been the support of the chairman of the board of governors that had been most meaningful.

Ultimately, the question is, "Who can I turn to for support who will tell me their honest opinion, and not what they think I want to hear?"

It means developing networks and recognizing that the list of people whose judgment can be trusted is limited by circumstances and geography. One source of support and encouragement for college presidents is colleagues who are or have been college presidents themselves. Other situations require different measures in order to survive:

> Buchman: We can't survive unless we're good politicians. Some of my colleagues have no political sense at all. It's awful.
>
> Interviewer: Do they *think* they have the "gift" of politics?
>
> Buchman: Yeah, sometimes they do (laughter). That's even worse! Then you have to say "Look, I'm sorry. In my view, and maybe I'm wrong, you don't give me very good political advice." There are people far beyond the board of governors who I trust in a political sense that I can go to. It's not political in the sense of Tory or Liberal, but in the sense of how do you play this issue. (1b.692-707)

Overall, the sense of support from internal and external constituencies is a gratifying aspect of the college presidency. President Smith reflected on receiving such support directly as the one who is seen as the head of the college, or at least its spokesperson. "That's satisfying for a person in my position, to be able to be the recipient of people's positive comments about the institution and strong financial support and so on" (5a.124-134).

In order to do their jobs, presidents rely on immediate colleagues "the senior people—VPs, your innermost circle, and maybe the Deans." for a particular kind of support.

> Buchman: Loyalty doesn't mean blind loyalty. Loyalty means an opportunity to think through solutions, look at all sorts of options, and then when

> agreement has come or the president decides, if you can't get a consensus, you carry on, unless there is a point of principle on which you would resign. I depend on my colleagues, that's not cabinet solidarity but to some extent it is. (1b.677-688)

The presidents also talked about working with supportive faculty and staff in the terms of the day-to-day operation of the college and also when special projects required extra effort from a number of individuals. A good example of the internal political process involved in gaining support is offered by President Buchman.

> If you want to be a leader who is pushing let's say, curriculum reform or technology, you know that you can stand up as the president and say something and the rest of the people say "Go to hell." You have to get a process to ensure that X,W and Z, who have some standing in the place, will also agree. So there's a political process, and it isn't saying, "I want to say this, will you support me?" It is, "This is an idea, what do you think of it?" (1b.853-862)

The preceding seven facets describing how presidents deal with the demands of the job were presented to paint a picture for you. The last theme explores how the presidents cope with the particular demands and maintain a healthy perspective of the role.

How Presidents Maintain Perspective on Their Work

Coping with the stress and pressure of the role can be a challenge for all presidents at times; given the nature of the job, perhaps talking about stress and how to maintain a healthy outlook is to be expected. This theme is presented in two parts. First, a brief look at some of the ways the presidents said they coped with or reacted to the pressures of their role. Second, how the presidents maintained perspective on their work by adopting a more healthy, realistic outlook.

Coping with Stress and Pressure

Mentioning "stress" when talking about how presidents respond to the demands of their role is to be expected. What is perhaps not so obvious is what situations are considered stressful by the presidents. Internalizing his job and likening the presidency to a "high wire balancing act," President Mercer spoke about the stress of working with the Board of Governors, and the feeling of pressure that a board member or any person of influence could easily knock the president off balance.

> Mercer: I tend to internalize things. I think "college" 24 hours a day, seven days a week and ended up with ulcers probably after about six or seven years, partly related to the stress. Some board members [have been] more capable than others. A poor board member can make life hell for a president. They often don't realize that the president's job is often a high wire balancing act and it's not that hard to knock the president off. The average president is lasting about between 3 and 4 years and you start saying—the pressure wasn't from a lack of job security, the pressure was from knowing you could be doing a very good job and still get knocked off the high wire. (3a.391-400)

President Sawatzky offers another perspective on the burden that a president may carry as a result of the job. He reflected on a period of his presidency where he "almost went under" ensuring a project was completed on time. He always thought he could leave any situation in the office at the end of the day, but learned otherwise: "There are times when I tell people I sleep like a baby—sleep an hour, cry an hour, sleep another hour, cry another hour." (2a.316-319)

While identifying with and internalizing college successes, presidents are so immersed in institutional activities they also are prone to internalizing college failures. For example, President Smith commented, "I tend to identify with the college and its well-being—perhaps more than I should. I take on its problems, I internalize its problems and I also internalize its successes" (5b. 715-717)

All presidents acknowledged personal issues in emotional and physical health that they attributed to their current position. The conditions range from general fitness concerns to stress-related insomnia and chronic ailments, such as ulcers and arthritis. While many presidents exercised on occasion, some are more disciplined in this area than others. As we talked about health issues, all the presidents were candid about what had been the physical toll of being president.

Exercise alone is not the key to coping with the demands of role. Maintaining a healthy perspective was viewed by the presidents as their main method of balancing the requirements of the role.

Having a Healthy Outlook

How do presidents cope with the stress and pressure of their jobs, maintaining a healthy perspective? All of the presidents appreciate the support of their spouses; they also recognize the inevitability of job loss or retirement. Another aspect of adopting a healthy outlook is to be reflective. Buchman views current situations with a broader perspective.

> Buchman: What puts [the issues I deal with] into perspective is looking at other people's problems. The longer term worries that I have about the institution are pretty substantial and they all relate around the funding and the attitudes. I think we're in for a very rough ride. So, you can't let yourself get depressed to the point that you can't function. Therefore, you get away from it. And it's wonderful what a weekend will do, or even a day. (1b.950-968)

At the same time, Buchman relies on his spouse and finds some time away from work to be helpful:

> First of all, I have, fortunately, a very happy marriage. We've been married for 35 years, my wife is wonderful. I probably am close to a workaholic, but, she's able to help me to spend some time—we bike, we walk . We walk the

> campus—which shows you I'm addicted—and I make notes of things I see on the campus while also meeting people, getting exercise. (1a. 338-345)

Similarly, president Smith finds he can stretch out on the couch at home and sleep for half an hour and then be ready to go again. "I guess I cope fairly well with a busy life. But at the same time, I've had to deal with some stressful things in my job which were pretty absorbing and it took me a few months to sort of ease out of that" (5a.233-236).

With respect to health issues, president McLeod regards himself as fortunate:

> McLeod: I happen to be a person who is never sick. I was teaching 18 years in a row and never missed a class for illness—ever. Well, one I almost did. I had laryngitis and went into the classroom and I said (hoarsely), "I really am having a problem today, but I've never missed a class in my life. If you don't mind I'll just stand in the middle here and I'll try to lecture forth and ask alot of questions—I don't want to spoil my record." And everybody cheered! (4b. 622-627)

President Buchman also recognized the high burnout rate of the office, and puts his tenure into perspective. "There's no magic in 5, 7, 8, 10 years or whatever. If you're lucky, you'll make the decision before somebody else that you should retire." According to Buchman, a president must accept the harsh reality of the position. "You have to realize that you can't meet all your dreams or expectations. I think the mistake of people[staying in the position longer than they should] is to say, 'I've got to finish off this and that.' In a college that's going to be so forever" (1a.332-347/351-359).

President Mercer shares Buchman's perspective of the presidency, having been in the position for a number of years. Mercer concedes that the presidency has probably affected his health, stress-related ulcers and arthritis being the result. Besides trying to stay physically fit, Mercer also tries to put things into the larger perspective and feels he is better at managing stress today than he was a decade ago.

He indicated that, looking back, perhaps it was the feeling that he could lose his job at any time—especially when he was new to the job and still relatively young— that contributed to his current health problems.

> I have no illusions I could lose my job next year, even if I were doing a good job. It wouldn't be as damaging now to my career as it would have been ten years ago. Where do elephants go when they die? Where do college presidents go when they get fired? Some go and sell real estate, some others are lucky if they catch on with another college. So, it's precarious. (3a.423-437)

President McLeod acknowledges God for providing the ability to persevere:

> God's gifted me with good health in that regard, I just keep moving on. Spirituality is important; my prayer life is very important to me. And I'm not only talking about Sunday worship but also [spending time in prayer] in the mornings [each] day. I find that since I became president actually, my prayer life has been very intense, it's been more intense than before because you know there are certain days when these are tough decisions and it's good to know there is someone there with you. (4b.631-636)

Part of maintaining a healthy perspective on the role for these presidents was to reflect upon their experiences. I asked the presidents the following questions: "Looking back at your experience of being president, how have you changed? What have you learned? What, if anything will you do differently in the future?" Because of the evolving nature of the interview guide, some of these reflective questions were conceived late in the interview process and as a result were not posed to all participants.

For those who were asked, "How have you changed?", the question evoked two distinctly different responses. President Mercer felt he hadn't really changed at all as a result of his experience: "I don't think that I've changed at all. I don't think I'm impressed with being a college president. I don't mean to downplay the role, it's extremely important... It may be simply that I don't take the job for granted." He talked at length about the dichotomy of feeling at times like nothing has been

accomplished and at the same time, feeling proud and content with everything that has been accomplished as president while looking forward to the future with enthusiasm.

> Mercer: As I say, I have the ying and yang feelings. On the one hand I haven't done nothin'. On the other hand, I am quite proud that a kid who came from a poor family and had seven brothers and sisters was the only one to go to university and wore hand-me down clothes. Hand-me-down clothes wasn't so bad, but my older siblings were sisters! (laughter) That's only partly true... But I'm quite proud of what I've been able to do, I guess, through hard work. I've always been interested in education, always had a fascination for learning. Partly for its own sake, but also knowing when I started with my undergraduate degree that if I didn't want to spend the rest of my life teaching, that I should acquire some further education. So, I guess a sense of accomplishment at the same time. As a person, I don't think I'm much different than I was as a kid when I was 18 years old in terms of my orientation to things. (3b.485-495)

President Sawatzky also felt that he hadn't changed much since taking the top job at the college in terms of philosophy, but in terms of seeing himself in the role more realistically.

With respect to their experiences, each president has encountered different opportunities for learning. The examples below include reflections on learning in terms of being sensitive to individuals in the midst of dealing with issues, on having a greater perspective and balance after years in office, and on having honed some leadership skills in learning to be a college president.

> Sawatzky: Hopefully one can make the tough decisions when they are needed and base them on the principles and have the person feel very definitely that this is not... you know, you're dealing with an issue, not a person. So that you're not destroying a person in what needs to be done. So that's the thing that probably I am still learning. There comes a time when you must crack the whip and be very, very firm. In an evaluation that I had this year, that was an area that people [commented on]. I sometimes need to be more firm on issues. (2b.602-609)

> Mercer: I may be a little more relaxed now, I don't get as wound up with criticism or crises or problems. But I still take them very seriously, and they still affect me, and I still see myself as highly motivated, I still fit in my 70

> hour week. I just do it perhaps differently than what I've done before. But you learn a lot over time.
>
> I have more of an attitude or more of an orientation now that "Hey, this is not [my] organization, this is our organization, and you're behaviour as a faculty or support staff association or a student association is shaping the nature of this organization. And you're part of the solution to the problem, it's not just my problem, it's not my college, it's our college. (3b.609-642)

> Smith: I've learned much better communication skills, learned to work with people more, learned management skills that I didn't have when I came, listening skills—some people I work with may not agree! (laughter) I think that I have learned to think big and to provide leadership and to think of new things and approach people with them, get people on side to make these things happen. (5b.778-787)

President Smith elaborated on what learning to delegate has meant to him and his leadership style over the years:

> Smith: In many areas—administration, finance, academic planning—you get involved in it, but at the same time you also say to others, "You generate the ideas, generate the thinking or generate the plan and we'll look at it and we'll respond to it and shape it." Reactive supervision, I guess you could call it. You react to other people's ideas and thinking. . . strategies for recruitment, advertising, these kinds of things. (5b.801-824)

Of the three presidents who were directly asked the question, "What will you do differently in future?", three different responses were received. The responses included adjusting one's expectations of what can be realistically accomplished, placing more emphasis on the educative role of the president rather than simply the administrative role, and learning to adjust one's management style as the institution grows.

> Sawatzky: I suspect one of the things that I have to work on, and we have all kinds of people working on this, is that I tend to find that I need to make a list of things I want to do. It's easy to procrastinate. . . [In the past] what I really burned out on was not from overwork, etc., but really what it is, is not getting everything done that you felt you should have. That gets the better of you—this I should have done or that I should have done. (2a.393-399)

> Mercer: I would like to put more emphasis on my role as an educator as opposed to an administrator, so I see doing some teaching. But I'll teach our staff, rather than our students. I guess what I'd also like to do, and I put this

> under the heading of "like" because it's easier said than done, is do a little bit more writing, a little bit more speaking on education. (3b.750-765)
>
> Smith: I need to learn more about management as the institution grows. There are many challenges, especially in terms of the changes that are taking place. We need to find ways to move into the whole electronic and information age in ways that will not swamp us. So I think the College will have to acquire expertise, and my role will be to make sure that it's here and that there are opportunities for learning among our staff and faculty to manage all these changes. (5b.883-893)

Summary of Findings

The job is complex and relentless—perhaps moreso than colleagues and outside observers have previously imagined. Raising funds, "making friends", taking care of personnel and sharing an organizational vision serve to describe the role in broad brush strokes.

The presidents' character and values are evident in terms of their relational styles. Their personal preferences emerged in the midst of the various ways they engaged their colleagues to build community, elicit feedback and communicate vision. A president's character is not only revealed in this context, but analyzed by staff, faculty and other observers because of the very public nature of the job. Being president means living in a "fishbowl" to an extent.

It seems that a major part of the experience of being a college president is coping with the demands of the job, which can be quite stressful. This is accomplished by maintaining a balanced lifestyle and a healthy perspective about the role. Part of maintaining a healthy perspective on the role for these presidents was to reflect upon their experiences. There were responses from the presidents regarding how they have changed, what they have learned, and what they would do differently

in the future representing both a convergence and divergence of thoughts and opinions.

These themes will be discussed in light of the literature in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is four-fold. First, to discuss the findings in comparison with the literature. Second, to discuss the themes presented in the previous chapter. Third, to suggest areas for further research. Fourth, to offer a personal postscript.

Comparison with the Literature

Included at the beginning of each of the three sections as a reminder of the literature review and to facilitate comparison with the findings of Chapter 4, is a synthesis of literature from Chapter 2 in the form of a "mini-table. " The table has been organized under three main headings—the skills of a leader, the heart of a leader, and the experiences of a college president. Several areas are in agreement with the data, but I will focus on the differences.

The Skills of a Leader

Skills:

- action - planning orientation, motivation to accomplish tasks
- intermediation - negotiating, managing conflict, collaborating

The position requires that the president be an effective leader with strong relational skills (Hogarth, 1987; Birnbaum, 1992; Fisher, Tack & Wheeler, 1988;

Gilley, Fulmer & Reithlingschoefer, 1986); he or she must: be adept at dealing with conflict, be politically astute and have a realistic perspective on the job (Kerr & Gade, 1986; Maurer, 1991; Benezet, Katz & Magnusson, 1981; Kauffman, 1980).

The findings indicated a general agreement here on these basic and essentially assumed skills. There were two divergent points to highlight:

Fisher, Tack and Wheeler (1988) suggested that effective presidents are more aloof—less collegial and more distant. However, the findings indicate that all five college presidents (perhaps to a fault) wish to be accessible, available—having an "open door."

The literature did not mention the repetitive nature of the role in addressing questions or concerns that seem to arise annually. Yet, the presidents I talked with did comment on the cyclical nature of the job in terms of dealing with parents, board members, student council, and even with other presidents which required particular skills in diplomacy. Each one spoke about how he was continually learning, making decisions (some which are unpopular) and continually dealing with the financial and political pressures that are inherent in operating any institution.

The skills of the college presidents varied according to their individual strengths and weaknesses. For example, one president talked about his lack of conflict management skills while another was satisfied with his ability to mediate a conflict; one president enjoyed raising funds for the college, another president had to force himself to function in this particular role. Overall, the skills of college presidents indicate a level of competence, versatility, and adaptability.

With respect to the sense of versatility and adaptability, the presidents were creatively opportunistic in that they saw the potential for a new project or program

and tried to move from the idea stage into tangible plans by creating interest amongst faculty and staff, and gaining their support. Trying to see into the short and long term future of higher education, the presidents are striving to create the best possible scenarios at their colleges to ensure future viability. Jumping on opportunities for government assistance and "rallying the troops" so that the money would be awarded is an example that the presidents mentioned, where an opportunity for additional funding simply could not be passed up—even though the faculty and staff who were then required to write the proposals had to work at a furious pace in order to meet application deadlines. The experiences of college presidents in this capacity could be likened to chess players, who are always trying to stay two or three moves ahead of their opponents.

In terms of the use of subtlety, the literature did not name this style of operating overtly, but did acknowledge the necessity of consensus building and networking in order to manage conflict, negotiate fairly and accomplish tasks. The "craft" or gift of subtlety has much to do with whom and how the presidents relate. For example, the presidents are aware of the importance of following a particular protocol in gaining faculty support for a new project, and speaking to individuals, drawing in their advice in making plans or making a decision. For most presidents it seems that many of these actions are intentional with more than the most immediate purpose in their minds. The presidents relate to an inner circle of advisors and colleagues, and quietly speak with other constituencies for advice and guidance when appropriate.

In summary, these college presidents are marked by good relational skills; they are diplomatic, are self-aware as to their own strengths and weaknesses, and are adept at anticipating and seizing new opportunities to advance their institutions.

The Heart of a Leader

Heart:

- vision, values - communicating values, aspirations, moral foundation
- empowerment - seeking organizational renewal and staff care
  - maximizing personal and institutional performance

In considering the heart of the leader, the literature points to moral leadership—where the president initiates, supports and sustains a group process where "what is good gets done" and the conditions for leadership are established at every level of the institution (Hodgkinson, 1991; Sergiovanni, 1992). It is up to individuals to empower themselves, to share in the vision of the school, and work creatively for both personal and professional satisfaction. Nurturing such a climate involves maintaining many relationships with all constituencies. While this may sound rather utopian, it is not without it's realistic edge. Yet, it is the commitment to the process of involving all stakeholders and thus shaping the culture of the institution that encourages participation and contributes to a healthy environment (Ogawa & Bossert, 1995; Bensimon, Neumann & Birnbaum, 1989; Maxcy, 1991; Schein, 1985). These sentiments were strongly evident in the findings.

Three of the presidents felt that the climate and culture of their campuses had improved over the past few years. They talked about communicating institutional values and goals and maintaining an open administration as a couple of ways to

nurture a positive environment. These activities are rooted in relationships with people and groups—interacting with them, responding to their questions and concerns. The presidents expressed their strong desire to have open communication with their colleagues and worked through colleagues by delegating authority or simply relying on colleagues who were chosen for their particular role because of their skills and abilities, to do the job. The presidents talked about taking care of faculty and staff by trying to create an environment whereby people's contributions to the college were recognized, and ensuring that the work is meaningful to those who are employed there.

The theme of vulnerability is apparent when a leader shares his life with colleagues. The heart of a leader includes those core values and beliefs that we might come to expect. It also involves the willingness to hear criticism—both professional and personal, to be fully present in the role, accepting the burden of responsibility and the accompanying emotional and time demands.

Some of the literature points out the expectations of constituents that leaders *lead* and be infallible. Contrasting literature promotes leadership which acknowledges uncertainty or indecision. For to tell the truth is to simply be human; to seek to be perfect is to seek to be God (Block, 1993). Other literature presents findings that aloof presidents, who appear to make decisions slowly, who are not spontaneous in public are perceived to be most effective (Fisher, Tack & Wheeler, 1988). Surely one style of relating is not mutually exclusive to the other.

In addition, the presidents all demonstrated a fairly developed capacity for reflection, seeking to do what is right in the context of the institutional mission and seeking ways to increase the sense of ownership amongst the campus community by

empowering people to do their jobs responsibly. The presidents acknowledged their own shortcomings and tried to be proactive or "reactive" in inviting colleagues to run with a particular project while simply guiding the process.

In summary, the heart of these leaders have a moral centre that seeks to improve conditions within the campus community by encouraging colleagues to do "what is right"; a moral leader's heart is exposed to colleagues in terms of the willingness to be vulnerable in relationships and in admitting one's own fallibility.

The Experience of Leadership

Experiences :

- reflection - brooding over past experiences and future decisions
- responsiveness - willing to hear criticism and pursue change

Leadership practitioners affirm the "heart values" mentioned above and challenge us to consider a style of leading that requires much from the individual. DePree (1989) encouraged a fresh perspective on servanthood. Block (1993) contends that leaders must allow themselves the freedom to be more "human" by acknowledging mistakes or uncertainty as an understandable and expected part of human nature. Eble (1978) and Kauffman (1981) exhort the president to be a strong exemplar of moral centredness. The notion of "servanthood" overlaps into this section from the previous one. It is difficult to compare the experiences of leaders from the literature to the experiences of the five college presidents, because each experience should be considered vital and important on its own. Nonetheless, the literature does seem to indicate that this "heart" of a leader affects or influences every aspect of his or her leadership.

The findings suggest that the extent to which heart qualities are evident, they reflect the level of peace, satisfaction, or contentment the president is experiencing at that time. In other words, they are indicative of the president's "survive-ability." As presidents reflected on their experiences, they recognized areas in which they were perhaps functioning poorly and determined ways in which to improve. The job is relentless, demanding, and not without personal and emotional cost. The presidents tried to be proactive with respect to health issues. As well, they attempted to maintain or adopt a realistic perspective about the job and about meeting the expectations of various constituencies. Hahn (1995) suggests that any style of leadership can be effective for a president, given certain conditions. In reality, what Hahn's comments do is shift the focus away from the president's leadership skills, abilities, ethics, integrity, and credibility to the other members of the college. Hahn challenges stakeholders to consider lowering their expectations of what the president can realistically accomplish.

As was indicated in the literature, the presidents recognized that in the midst of high demands and situations beyond their control, they had to withdraw, making the time to relax—this action appeared to be one of the main coping mechanisms in dealing with pressure at work. It is interesting that the only way to stay relatively balanced was to get away, thus maintaining fairly rigid boundaries; when they are at work, the presidents seem to be fully involved. Inherent in this kind of work is the sense that presidents have a cycle or rhythm to their work that enables them to work nearly to the point of exhaustion, and then plan some time—an afternoon, day, or weekend to get away and re-charge.

Summary of Comparison With the Literature

The various parts of the literature review help to lay a foundational understanding of being a college president. However, the "skills" or theory books for the most part, didn't discuss living out the experience of being a college president, and the experience books didn't talk much about theory. Instead, the "heart" books spoke about leadership in the context of relationships and the leader's ability to share leadership through empowerment, to be honest, and to be human--admitting mistakes or moments of indecision, rather than trying to maintain an image of infallibility (Block, 1993).

The findings affirmed much of the work of the theorists and the recommendations of the practitioners in terms of how the presidents, either intentionally or intuitively put theory into practice.

Considering the Themes

In this section, the three themes describing the experiences of the five college presidents will be discussed. To introduce the discussion around the first theme, I invite you to put yourself in the president's shoes for a moment. The following narrative is a composite assembled from the stories that the five presidents told describing their experiences.

Relentless Complexity: "How Would You Like to Walk in my Shoes for a Day?"

Cuts to education by the provincial government in recent years have necessitated that institutions learn to do more with less through restructuring,

relying on attrition, and pursuing all possible cost saving measures. As a result, the climate in education is pressure-filled and the future uncertain.

Recently, government funding was offered on relatively short notice. In order to qualify, the application must be formulated within a few months—a process that normally would take at least a year. The crying need for additional funds has forced you and most other presidents and institutions to pursue all potential revenue sources, reacting to opportunities that are presented and expending a lot of energy in the process. Perhaps this experience is more acutely felt in smaller institutions like yours, where you, the academic VP, and some faculty members focus on applying for grants, often to the detriment of other pressing duties.

The climate is one of uncertainty. Observing enrollment trends, your presidential colleagues anticipate that most colleges and universities will be in for a "rough ride" over the next few years. An economic downturn has resulted in higher unemployment and a student population who tends to back away from the liberal arts in favor of more direct training which is more job-specific and more likely to result in landing a job.

As a fairly new college president, you feel the pressure to work hard, putting in 70-80 hour weeks and hoping that you will be able to keep on top of things. There are financial pressures, declining enrolments, funding cuts, unsuccessful fundraising efforts; the faculty wants to re-negotiate their collective bargaining agreement over the next three months; you will be required to speak at 20 different events over the next two weeks. The most

demanding engagement will be facing the faculty council to talk about the budget cuts that will have to be made for next year.

It is Friday morning. You've been in the office since 6 a.m. dictating memos and preparing for the day. You will not see your pillow again until after midnight. The Mayor's office is hosting a dinner reception for some visiting dignitaries this evening. Of course, you agreed to attend along with your spouse. Some friends, also going to the dinner, will be coming back to your home for coffee and late night conversation. There's a golf game scheduled for early Saturday morning with some business people who are interested in sponsoring some college programs. A successful first impression could pave the way to some much-needed funding to kick-start the new capital campaign.

There is always something that needs to be accomplished immediately—urgent needs, looming deadlines. Being president is living life in the fast lane. It is fun, but it is also relentless.

The narrative helps the reader enter into the world of the presidency, to walk in his shoes for a moment, to imagine the complexity and ponder the dilemmas. It is important to have a picture describing the visceral nature of presidential leadership because I suspect that colleagues or observers lack adequate understanding about the experience of the presidency to appreciate what the job truly entails. This awareness is essential to address any misperceptions by clarifying the reality of the role. Part of the difficulty of understanding the role is that there are paradoxes inherent in the job of president. By unpacking a few of these paradoxes and ironies which illustrate the

confusing bind presidents often find themselves in, I hope to shed some light on how the role is so complex.

The image of a pendulum swinging back and forth is perhaps helpful. There are extreme opposites which the presidents move between. The job can be "exciting one moment and a disaster the next." This echoes the description in the literature of the presidency as "splendid agony." This phrase, splendid agony, exemplifies the sense of the paradox which exists. An example of an irony is when presidents recognize that in order to have the most impact, they must be prepared to work in the background, initiating movement, without being concerned who gets the credit. What can become a very successful campus initiative may never be associated with the president who initiated the task.

There is also a sense of the tension between wanting to be viewed by constituents as "normal"—for example, being able to think out loud amongst colleagues in casual conversation— and being heard by colleagues as forcefully stating an agenda, which then amplifies any offhand remarks and interprets them as institutional policy. Another example is the mistaken perception by people of the president as being the leader who occupies the "all-powerful" top post in the institution, which in reality holds little more than apparent power.

The presidents accept that this may never happen in reality, but if they had one wish, it would be that their constituencies would have their level of awareness heightened as to the complexities that exist for presidents as they fulfill the role. The sense of paradox carries over into the next theme, that the relational style of the president reflects his character.

Character Revealed in Relationship

One thing I found interesting was how this role affects, involves, and demands the whole person. Being a college president is indeed a "24-hour" job. But how does the job involve the whole person? Consider the following list of verbs taken from the data:

> managing, communicating, reflecting, receiving, trusting, deciding, leading, encouraging, sharing, influencing, connecting, teaching, facilitating, serving.

These words point to the depth of character in each of the presidents as they seek to relate to their colleagues. The job involves the whole person because it requires someone who is primarily capable of establishing and nurturing relationships with internal and external constituencies. This fact might seem simple and obvious, but I believe there are profound implications for presidents. The five presidents did not talk about being the charismatic leader mounted on a white horse shouting, "follow me." What they talked about was empowerment, relating to people, and hiring capable personnel. Essentially, they sought to serve their colleagues through the provision of meaningful work.

It is ironic, but as presidents carry out the requirements of their role through the "fishbowl" existence of such a public position, they perhaps fall short of the unrealistic expectations of others. While trying to act in the best interests of the institution and individuals, there are "ascribed motives" which are attached to the president's actions by hostile or uninformed observers. Labelling the president as only having "ascribed motives" or viewing him as not meeting people's expectations has the effect of "de-humanizing" the president, forgetting there is a face, a name, a person who fulfills the role. Someone who is not all powerful and all-knowing, but flesh and blood, and capable of making mistakes. Someone who truly believes in the

mission of college and in the worth of people and is able to communicate these beliefs through relational means.

How did the role of college president become "de-humanized?" I think the unrealistic expectations and demands of various stakeholders contributed to this effect. In addition, the barrier which exists between those in main leadership roles and those who contribute to the institution in other ways has also had a detrimental effect. Such a barrier diminishes the opportunity for something more than a superficial relationship to exist between presidents and other colleagues. And often, this is the very nature of leadership—feeling alone or choosing to remain aloof in anticipation of perhaps one day having to deal with serious issues involving employees.

Thus far we have been considering themes of how the job is complex and relentless and how the president's relational style reflects his character. The third theme has to do with how presidents cope with the demands of their role.

Dealing with the Demands of the Role

Being a college president hopefully means recognizing that the job has some inherent costs. For example, the job can be overwhelming, the position can be precarious, and striving to meet the challenges of the role can exact a physical and/or emotional toll.

The job is complex, diverse, and demanding. President Buchman called it "relentless." President McLeod said, "I don't know if I can tell you how much pressure there is." Financial pressure, time pressures. The burden of responsibility or the mantle of leadership weighs heavy on these presidents. The fast-pace of the

various tasks that need to be accomplished. There are concerns from parents and board members that seem to come up annually that need to be addressed. There is also the sense of being a focal point for peoples' anger and frustration with "the system" the institution represents. There are decisions that must be made; the decision making process itself can be quite complicated as the presidents must be involved in gathering all pertinent information, consulting with all appropriate personnel, and determining the best solution to address the problem. The job is demanding in its variety and complexity. Presidents virtually have to be "jacks of all trades, and masters of many" in order to be effective. I don't believe that one person can be all of these things; therefore, it would almost seem as though the very nature of the job has evolved to a point where it can't be done by one individual in such a way that all constituencies will be satisfied.

The job is overwhelming because it seems like by the very complex nature of the role, being a highly successful college president is less likely than simply being mediocre or even an abject failure. Perhaps there is an almost Darwinian expectation placed upon the presidency, where we expect only the best, strongest, most capable leaders to endure over time. Do we view leadership primarily (and stereotypically) as the domain of type A personalities only, where just the fittest leaders survive? Or could leadership really be a place where a more moderate personality may survive and even thrive, comfortable with building relationships, leading by influence and simply not needing to dominate?

Perhaps these two questions are simply two sides of the same coin, depicting the stark contrast between two clearly different leadership styles. The presidents I talked with all sought consensus, preferred to delegate and empower their colleagues

and promoted an open administration. If the problem is not with these presidents, who I think intend to do the right thing, could the leadership "problem" be with the followers? Our post-modern, highly individualistic and relativistic society doesn't allow leaders to lead perhaps the way they used to. Again, maybe it is about perspective. While the president is busy proving he is competent by working long hours in a variety of capacities, perhaps it is the striving to meet unrealistic expectations of colleagues, observers or even themselves that makes fulfilling the role a monumental challenge. Could presidents have difficulty in doing their jobs because colleagues and constituents do not allow them the freedom to lead as we perhaps did in ages past? It may be related simply to human nature in this generation. We are not as trusting as we used to be. We are suspicious of those in leadership who claim to be acting in our best interest.

What is overwhelming about being a college president? No matter how much you do, you are never caught up. Colleagues and observers don't seem to either recognize or appreciate the pressure and complexity inherent in the role. Expectations of what can actually be accomplished by a college president may be unrealistic. How does a president deal with the complexity, the demands and the expectations?

Maintaining Perspective

Maintaining a healthy perspective toward the role is crucial for the presidents. Not only is the role complex and demanding, the position can be precarious. It could be considered as leading while standing on a giant bowl of jello—everything is always changing. In addition, doing the job costs the individual something, exacting

a physical or emotional toll. Maintaining a healthy perspective is to recognize the reality of the role. It can be precarious and it can be costly.

The precarious nature of the position has to do with the fact that even if the president is doing a good job, he or she can be here one day, gone the next. One president said, in effect, "Better that you make the decision to retire before it is made for you." To have the threat of potential job loss hanging over your head must feel absolutely debilitating.

> Mercer: I have no illusions I could lose my job next year. Even if I were doing a good job, it wouldn't be as damaging now to my career as it would have been ten years ago. Where do elephants go when they die? Where do college presidents go when they get fired? Some go and sell real estate, some others are lucky if they catch on with another college... So, it's precarious. (3a.423-437)

Each president described the pressure they feel in fulfilling their role. The pressure to function at a very high level. "You're only as good as your last day's work." was a sentiment expressed by president Mercer. Not only is there a high level of demands on the president in this fast-paced environment, but the demands are constantly changing and continually present.

> Mercer: The average president is lasting about between 3 and 4 years and you start saying—the pressure wasn't from a lack of job security, the pressure was from knowing you could be doing a very good job and still get knocked off the high wire. (3a.398-400)

Similarly, "There's no magic in 5, 7, 8, 10 years or whatever. If you're lucky, you'll make the decision before somebody else that you should retire." According to Buchman, a president must accept the harsh reality of the position. "You have to realize that you can't meet all your dreams or expectations. I think the mistake of people[staying in the position longer than they should] is to say, 'I've got to finish off this and that.' In a college that's going to be so forever" (1a.332-347/351-359).

The sense of precariousness is perhaps heightened by not only the high pressure, but the existence of "apparent power" only; being at the whim or influence of agendas other than one's own.

> Buchman: You have to live with that and realize that once you have apparent power—and there's not much—or authority, or influence or more information than somebody else has, you're viewed with suspicion. And often, the more you try to deal with this, the worse it gets. (1b.647-650)

There seems to be a double message for some presidents which states, "We [the members of the Board or Senate] want you to work diligently to advance this college—but if you make any mistakes or if we decide you don't belong anymore, you could be gone at anytime." The Board is basically demanding total commitment from the president and, for their part, appear to be only offering a tentative commitment in return. The sense that a termination could happen seemingly on a whim is something totally out of the president's control. This feeling must have an effect on a president over time. The effects could range from a gradually wearing down of energy reserves and focus to, in an extreme form, a mild depression that their work is not good enough or that they are so far behind the eight ball as far as meeting goals and fulfilling expectations that there is absolutely no way to catch up. Continually dealing with the what has become known as the "tyranny of the urgent" precludes any opportunity for refreshment and renewal in the midst of day-to-day demands. The ultimate effect on the president could manifest itself in a physical or emotional way.

Maintaining a healthy perspective is key to dealing with the emotional and physical cost of leadership such as ulcers, arthritis, and other health and wellness

issues which are believed to be stress-related. Being self-aware, recognizing how one responds to day-to-day demands, and taking time to withdraw and recharge seem vital.

Internalizing institutional successes and failures is one of the ways presidents typically reacted. Knowing the precarious nature of one's position, approaching each day with enthusiasm, but recognizing that the Board could decide to terminate the employment contract at any time was traumatic. Other draining parts of the job were dealing with personnel conflicts, collective bargaining, usually with highly critical people. All of these tensions could be best described as "riding an emotional roller coaster." What heightens the ride is the ever present burden of responsibility and how it can affect a president over time. Fulfilling the role is exacerbated by the very public nature of the job—leadership in a fishbowl, under the close scrutiny of colleagues and observers. While watching a recent movie about another type of public leader, "The American President," it occurred to me that the experience of being a college president is to deal with the personal and professional costs of such a position.

In the movie, President Andrew Sheppard just wants to be "one of the guys." Yet, his closest friends call him "Mr. President" even though he insists on being called "Andy." One particularly poignant moment came when the president comments on an escalating war of words between himself and republican presidential candidate. He is frustrated by the relentless media attack launched by his opponent, aimed at discrediting Sheppard's character. The president says, "This [conflict] isn't about my work, it's about me." Leadership affects the heart of the individual —

especially when receiving criticism or reacting to a situation is somehow personalized.

President Smith commented, "I tend to identify with the college and its well-being—perhaps more than I should. I take on its problems, I internalize its problems and I also internalize its successes" (5b. 715-717). Smith also said, "I've had to deal with some stressful things in my job which were pretty absorbing and it took me a few months to sort of ease out of that." Similarly, Mercer said, "I tend to internalize things. I think 'college' 24 hours a day, seven days a week and ended up with ulcers probably after about six or seven years, partly related to the stress" (3a.391-393).

President McLeod mentioned how draining conflict with or between personnel can be. President Sawatzky offers another perspective on the burden that a president may carry as a result of the job. He reflected on a period of his presidency where he "almost went under." He always thought he could leave any situation in the office at the end of the day, but learned otherwise.

As with most jobs there are critical moments which focus on frustration and the feeling of being stuck and unable to make a hard decision. President Buchman reflected, "We get paid to make decisions. They might not always be the right ones, but I do my best. I try to make sure I'm well rested when it comes to making a tough decision, I want to be thinking clearly."

Just as the school year is cyclical, so also are the elected positions on the Board of Governors and the Student Executive. Every year, new people come into such positions and question why the institution is doing things a particular way, or have a list of demands that they expect to be addressed immediately. Often, the president must patiently offer his or her longer term view of the institution and the

particular situation being presented. New board members or student leaders tend to have a shorter term view of the issues than the president. The annual explanation of "why we do things the way we do" becomes a tiresome, repetitious cycle.

The experiences of these college presidents demonstrates that leadership in this environment, with its demands and stressors, can exact a physical and emotional toll. What is the significance of the physical or emotional toll on college presidents for educators, administrators, and other presidents?

The presidents should be proactive in terms of recognizing the importance of establishing a self-care regimen that works, having realistic expectations, seeking appropriate support, and accessing on-going professional development and/or adequate training in the role.

Summary

Being a college president costs the individual something. This is not intended to diminish the positive regard these presidents hold for the position, but to acknowledge that the cost of holding this particular office can be quite high. The role has evolved into a state where presidents are continually scrambling to keep up with the demands. As a result, maintaining a healthy perspective and being proactive with respect to physical and emotional health issues would appear to be of vital importance for the presidents.

Besides confirming much of what has already been covered in the literature, this study was initiated to elicit data from current college presidents. By presenting a broad overview of the experiences of being a college president and distilling the

experiences of five provincial presidents, it is hoped that new insights and information were provided.

Suggestions for Further Research

I would like to suggest how the question, "What is the experience of being a college president?" could be further explored in at least five ways. First, researchers could consider interviewing women who are college presidents to compare their experiences with what appears to be data in the literature consisting of a predominantly male experience.

Second, the president's experience could be framed in light of the leadership team of VPs. In other words, a researcher could consider prosopography for the president and leadership team (VPs, deans) in order to study them as a group, and how the group process affects the president's experience. This could also involve a systems theory approach to viewing these administrative relationships.

More precise data may also be obtained by isolating some of the different roles that the president undertakes. For example, I would have been interested to know more about working with the Board of Trustees and spending a significant amount of time in the study reflecting on all the dynamics that come to bear on the crucial relationship between board members and presidents. Researchers could consider investigating a specific experience or incident—making a critical decision or managing one particular conflictual situation—which could highlight the experience of being a college president and perhaps show the interplay between the president and key colleagues in the process.

With respect to the personal costs of the presidency, further research could be done on the coping mechanisms and proactive measures that leaders employ to sustain themselves. In addition, some attention could be given to how leaders employ social influence in their institutions, and determine if is there any relationship between the president's ability to employ social influence and his or her longevity as president.

If we are stakeholders in the college community, are we partially responsible for the some of the negative experiences of our presidents as they try to fulfill their role? Is it reasonable, as Hahn (1995) suggests, that we should change our expectations of what the president can realistically accomplish? Should we attempt to re-think our perceptions of who the president really is, or what he or she represents? Further research seeking to understand how and why presidents are perceived by others in a particular way could be of interest.

Hahn (1995) suggests that any style of leadership can be effective for a president, given certain conditions. In reality, what Hahn's comments do is shift the focus away from the president's leadership skills, abilities, ethics, integrity, and credibility to the other members of the college. Hahn challenges stakeholders to consider lowering their expectations of what the president can realistically accomplish. This point is crucial I think, in terms of how presidents may strive to cope with expectations in the future.

In terms of meeting self-imposed and external expectations, it seems to me that this will be the issue for presidents in the future in terms of not only surviving the role, but emerging at the end of their leadership with at least a measure of contentment and satisfaction in their contribution to the institution. The literature

showed us former presidents who are "spent" people. They gave everything to their job and look back upon the experience with a mixture of contentment and disappointment. They enjoyed the job but they would never do it again; they wondered if it was all worth it. The current presidents are not in the same reflective position obviously, but it would be interesting to compare their perceptions of the presidency upon retirement with the perceptions recorded here.

Postscript

Leadership is a complex topic. And I can think of no more complex environment in which to exercise leadership than on a college campus. By understanding more about the experience of these five college presidents, I have learned to adjust my expectations of what the president can really do for any individual, department, or an entire college. The person in the president's role has become more human to me. As well, having met some college presidents, my sense of responsibility as a member of the higher education community has been heightened. I have gained a greater appreciation for the task of these college presidents, who have learned to survive and even thrive in a complex job on the strength of their character and commitment to their institutions.

REFERENCES

Benezet, L.T. (1981). Style and substance: Leadership and the college president. Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education.

Berendzen, R (1986). Is my armor straight? A year in the life of a university president. Bethesda: Adler & Adler.

Berg, B. L. (1989). Qualitative research methods for the social sciences. Needham Heights, Massachusetts: Allyn & Bacon.

Birnbaum, R. (1988). How colleges work: The cybernetics of academic organization and leadership. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Birnbaum, R. (1992). How academic leadership works. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Block, P. (1993). Stewardship: Choosing service over self-interest. San Francisco: Barret-Koehler Publishers.

Bloom, A. (1987). The closing of the american mind. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Bogdan, R.C., & Biklen, S.K. (1992). Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Carbone, R.F. (1981). Presidential passages: Former college presidents reflect on the splendor and agony of their careers. Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education.

Cross, G.L. (1983). Letters to bill on university administration. Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press.

De Pree, M. (1989). Leadership is an art. New York: Dell Publishing.

De Pree, M. (1992). Leadership jazz. New York: Dell Publishing.

Fisher, J.L., Tack, M.W., & Wheeler, K.J. (1988). The effective college president. New York: American Council on Education and Macmillan Publishing Co.

Flawn, P.T. (1990). A primer for university presidents: Managing the modern university. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Fris, J. (1994). This conflict involved more than "bossiness." The Canadian School Executive, 14 (2), 26-28.

Gilley, J.W., Fulmer, K.A., & Reithlingshoefer, S.J. (1986). Searching for academic excellence: Twenty college and universities on the move and their leaders. New York: American Council on Education and Macmillan Publishing Company.

Guba, E.G., & Lincoln, Y.S. (1982). Epistemological and methodological bases of naturalistic inquiry. Educational Communication and Technology Journal. 30, (4), 233-252.

Hahn, R. (1995, January 6). How tough is it to be a college president? The Chronicle of Higher Education. p.A64.

Hicks, M. H. (1993). Principal: Conductor of school culture. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Alberta, Edmonton.

Hodgkinson, C. (1991). Educational leadership: The moral art. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Hogarth, C.P. (1987). Quality control in higher education. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, Inc.

Kauffman, J.F. (1980). At the pleasure of the board: The service of the college and university president. Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education

Kerr, C. & Gade, M. L. (1986). The many lives of academic presidents: Time, place & character. Washington: Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges.

Lancy, D.F. (1993). Qualitative research in education. New York: Longman.

Lovett, C.M. (1994, April 27). College leadership and the dangers of 'magical thinking.' The Chronicle of Higher Education. p.A44.

Maurer, R.E. (1991). Managing conflict: Tactics for school administrators. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Maxwell, J.A. (1992). Understanding and validity in qualitative research. Harvard Educational Review. 62, (3) 279-298.

Ogawa, R.T., & Bossert, S.T. (1995). Leadership as an organizational quality. Educational Administration Quarterly, 31 (2), 224-243.

Senge, P.M. (1990). The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization. New York: Currency Doubleday.

Sergiovanni, T.J. (1992). Moral leadership: Getting to the heart of school improvement. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Thorpe, K.M. (1989). Interpreting the activities of nursing educational administrators: A leadership perspective. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Alberta, Edmonton.

van Manen, M. (1990). Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy. New York: State University of New York Press.

Appendix A: Interview Guide

1. Please tell me about yourself - your background and how you came to be in your current leadership role.
2. What is it like being president - what are the pluses and minuses?

Sub-questions:

- What is your biggest dream as president? What is your worst nightmare?
- What conditions in the organization do you strive to achieve?
- What conditions in the organization do you strive to avoid?
- What conditions in people (your followers) do you strive to achieve?
- What conditions in people (your followers) do you strive to avoid?
- Do you consider yourself to be fairly healthy? What do you do to stay in shape mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually?
- Do you consider your college to be fairly healthy?
- Is there anything else you'd like to add in describing what it feels like to be a college president?

Questions used during follow-up interview:

1. How have you changed since becoming president?
2. What have you learned?
3. What, if anything, will you do differently in future?
4. How would you describe the reality your job to people both inside and outside the institution?

Appendix B: Letter of Introduction from Advisor

June 2, 1995

Dear President _____:

I wish to introduce Greg Charyna, a masters student in the Department of Education Policy Studies [Educational Administration]. His area of research interest is the experiences of college presidents. He is currently working on his thesis having completed a research proposal and is now ready to start his data collection. This proposal has been approved by a University Ethics Committee and the supervisory committee. His data gathering involves two conversations with each President. His letter of introduction, attached, explains the research in more detail.

I am writing to encourage you to participate in the study, which is a fresh approach for learning more about the experience of being a college president. The information that Mr. Charyna plans to obtain will also be of benefit to this Department in our graduate courses in postsecondary education.

If you agree to be involved, or have any questions concerning this request, would you please contact me at the above address or phone 492-0219 (office) or 662-2085 (home). Your general support throughout the data-collection phase of Mr. Charyna's research will be greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Joe Fris, Ph.D.
Professor and Supervisor

Appendix C: Letter of Introduction from Researcher

June 2, 1995

Dear President _____:

I am a Master's student at the U of A studying educational administration. My thesis topic is "The experiences of college presidents." I invite you to take part in the study, thus adding your insights to what is known about being a college president. Please consider sharing your experience with future educational administration students and practitioners.

I believe that telling the stories of college presidents will provide an important perspective in the development of future educational leaders. At present there is very little empirical information about this important role. The experiences of leaders like you are profoundly meaningful as well as illustrative of current theory.

If you are available, I'd like to meet with you at a convenient time for an interview lasting about an hour. Two weeks later, I would like to meet again to go over your initial responses, have you make any additions or corrections to my record of our conversation and perhaps talk at greater length about a particular aspect of your experience.

As a participant, you would be able to opt our of the project at any time without obligation. Names, places and descriptions would be left out or disguised to preserve your anonymity. You will receive a copy of the research report for participating in the project.

Should you wish to be involved or require more information, please contact me at home 439-0387 or via Internet: gcharyna@gpu.srv.ualberta.ca. I will be calling you during the week of June 12-16 to discuss the project with you further and possibly arrange a suitable time for an interview.

I look forward to talking with you soon.

Sincerely,

Greg Charyna
M.Ed. Student
University of Alberta